NUMBER 19

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THE SPACE GAMER

FOR CREATIVE ADVENTURES

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THE SPACE GAMER

FOR CREATIVE ADVENTURES

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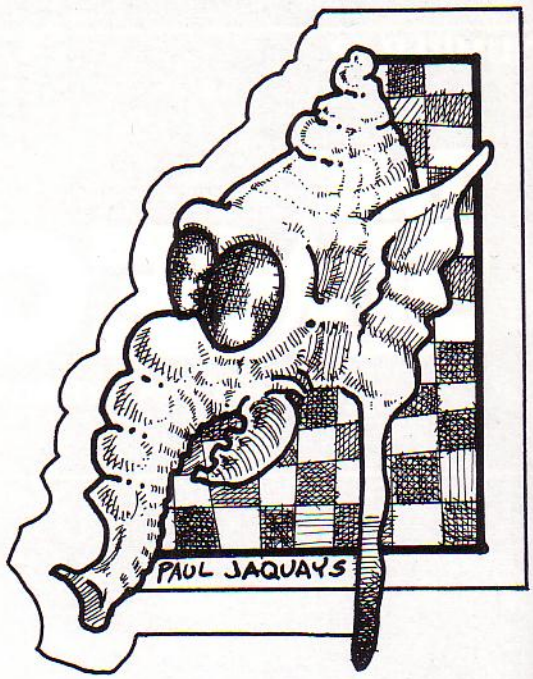


THE LAST WORD

MATERIAL-I-WOULD-LIKE-TO-SEE-COME-ACROSS-MY-DESK: MicroGame tactical and strategic articles that *don't* introduce a variant, *don't* add units, and generally, *don't* mess around with the published rules. These articles might require graphics that would be done by our staff (a "rough" would be required). They should be well-*re*-written, and to the point. These great articles are about to be written by anyone who reads THE SPACE GAMER or plays MicroGames. They will mean instant fame. They will bring a check from Metagaming. They will satisfy a need to express oneself in a logical, medium. Send all submissions to: C.B. Ostrander, THE SPACE GAMER, Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761.

The above is in response to the letters I get all the time about what "stands the best chance of getting published in TSG". I am happy to look at any material that might activate the average gamer's imagination, but I would like..., oh well, I said it already.

As usual, I apologize for the lateness of this issue. Look for No. 20 very soon.

There will be some very special material in the next two issues of THE SPACE GAMER. We have brought some old ideas to fruition, and readers are in for some treats.

.....C.B.Ostrander

WHERE WE'RE GOING

THE SPACE GAMER has gotten many comments, most favorable, since we switched to our large format. The unfavorable comment is more like, "that's great, but. . . . ".

The "buts" fall into two classes. Some want more material about a specific game, THE FANTASY TRIP series, CHITIN: I, OGRE, OLYMPICA, etc. Others want more material on science fiction/space games in general. The latter sprinkle their opinions with remarks like, "too much fantasy", "remember you're the SPACE GAMER," or "we've already got The Dragon."

We publish the best of the material submitted. About 75% of what is submitted is fantasy based material. I wish we had more "hard" science fiction game articles. The fact is we just don't get as many acceptable articles as we'd like.

So, if you want more non-fantasy material in THE SPACE GAMER, write for us. We'll take any of the following as long as you spell, punctuate, make sense and rewrite:

1. Descriptions of MicroGames played. Ideally these should have a few position "maps", comments from both players, and enough narrative to convey the course of play.

2. Interviews with game designers or gaming personalities. There should be reasonable organization and some "theme" to the interview. Permission of the interviewee is needed for publication.

3. Gaming news articles. A lot happens in gaming that isn't published. How are conventions organized and run? How are clubs started and what makes them work? How are games prepared for publication? How can you plan to get the most from attending a convention? Etc., etc., the list of new how-to articles is endless.

4. Fiction. We would like at least one short story per issue. Writing fiction that gives someone a "good read" isn't easy. Fiction based on specific games is preferred. Fiction on any conflict theme can be acceptable.

5. Strategic and tactical analysis articles. These would be similar to articles we've run in the past that analyze a game and give opinions about how to win.

Well, there it is. TSG is dependent on readers for material published.

COMPUTER UPDATE: Our basic computer system has, finally, arrived. We're up to our ears in programming the mail order paperwork, subscriptions, and mailing lists. Despite some software gliches, things are much smoother than any large installed system I've ever seen; and that includes Honeywells, Spectra 70s, Univacs, and IBM.

The system is really a big hobbyist computer. But, it cost a third of what IBM, TI, Data General and others wanted. Also, it can *do* more, given a programming familiarity and willingness to work and learn.

After our accounting and recordkeeping is computerized we'll do the play-by-mail games. Waiting isn't fun, we want to play as badly as anyone. But, if the paper tiger isn't tamed, nothing else will ever get done well.

BOXED GAMES? After biting the bullet and killing boxed games in the spring, they may be back. Now, please, don't get your hopes up. Things look favorable *now*. As in any game, things could change. But, just maybe. . . . .

SPI FLATTERY? In S&T no. 70 Simulation Publications Inc. has announced a "micro oops! mini", to quote Phil Kosnett, game series. Howard Barasch told me by phone that introduction is tentatively first quarter 1979. The concept is also put in the feedback section of that issue. The standard description includes 8½ x 11½ map, 40-56 counters and "up to" four pages of rules for $3.50 each. All titles listed are science fiction flavored, hmmm.

SPI will no doubt sell many minis and make some needed cash. Metagaming views this move as an opportunity. SPI has more distributors and retail outlets than we do. All will carry the minis because of pricing. That should open a few doors previously closed to us. So, a big thanks to SPI.

The long run success of SPI Minis will be meausred against the Micros. If they are less game, less attractive and less fun than MicroGames, SPI will miss most of the market potential. If SPI puts the effort in small games they deserve, their minis will be a hit.

The big surprise in SPI Minis isn't that one of the big two has finally recognized Micro size and price. The surprise is the science fiction flavor! Why not do historical Minis in SPI's bread and butter market?

Metagaming is already in early planning stages for some historical MicroGames in mid to late 1979. We may never do "big", "huge", "monstrous" or "absolutely stupendous, gigantic and colossal" sized historical games, but Micro sized historical themes could be fun if we stay with the easy, fun, playable concept.

Metagaming will remain primarily a science fiction and fantasy game company. But, there is a market opportunity with historical Micros. If we look at them as alternate history and work on general situations, the fun element will survive.

THE FANTASY TRIP: IN THE LABYRINTH?! Sigh, work is progressing. I spoke to Steve Jackson through the barrel hole just yesterday. He swapped me *three* whole pages of rules for a can of coke! We've given him no news of the outside world since May. *Please*, if you ever see him after TFT: ITL is done, tell him that public female nudity really was all the rage in the summer of '78.

Of course, every time I press him hard for TFT: ITL, he asks me about HYMENOPTERA. After we yell at each other a bit, I stick the cork back in the hole.

HARD TIMES are now hitting the economy. Inflation, the hard 1978 winter, and a soft economy are hurting game companies, as well as you and everyone else.

For gaming, the economic trend means weak x-mas sales on top of late paying cash flow problems. It may be that the shake out I'd predicted for gaming firms will start soon.

The problem started with a number of hobby shops folding from the midwest and eastern blizzards. Lost sales and late payments impacted distributors which eventually hurt the companies. Most game firms are experiencing cash flow problems right now. Metagaming is probably one of the few exceptions.

For the gamer, this means a slowing of planned releases. It also means some of the smaller firms may fold. It almost certainly means higher prices. Firms with low profit margins, okay in good times, will have to make more off lower unit sales.

The mention of MicroGame tournaments in the last TSG has brought numerous inquiries from convention coordinators. We are working with several people on developing MicroGame tournaments. It may be that we'll have to have a special section of News & Plugs just for co-sponsored tournaments with Metagaming products.

.....Howard Thompson

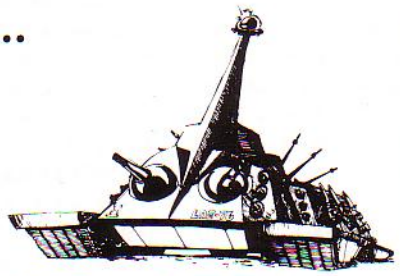
SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

Metagaming's MicroGames are small, fast-playing, and inexpensive. But not trivial. A MicroGame is a classic wargame — that you can put in your pocket and play over lunch.

It won't take you all day to learn the rules — or all night to play. But each one is challenging — and fun. MORE play for LESS money? Try a MicroGame and see.

MicroGame 1...

OGRE



$2.95 — $2.50 for The Space Gamer subscribers.

The OGRE is a robotic tank — 30 meters long, armed with nuclear weapons, incredibly tough, and inhumanly intelligent. This fast-moving game pits *one* Ogre against a force of "conventional" tanks, infantry and hovercraft in the year 2085. It's an even match . . .

MicroGame 3...

Man-to-man combat with archaic weapons — from **THE FANTASY TRIP.** For one, two, or several players. You create fighters, set their strength and dexterity, choose their weapons and armor,

MELEE

and send them into the arena. Victors improve their skill; losers die. Combat humans, animals, monsters, elves, dwarves, or orcs...it's up to you. *$2.95 — $2.50 to TSG subscribers.*

MicroGame 9...

IceWar

It's finally happened: the Russian raid on the Alaskan oilfields. The ESA (European Socialist Alliance) raiders are equipped with armed hovercraft and miss-ile-firing sled vehicles. The U.S. player (with infantry, tanks, satellite recon, and air transport) must locate and destroy the ESA force before the oilfields are burned. *$2.95 — $2.50 for TSG subscribers.*

MicroGame 7...

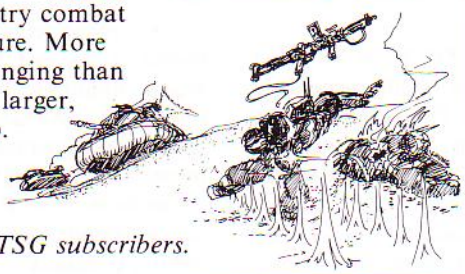
The Webbies have taken over Mars — and Earth will be next, unless a daring U.N. raid can crack the Martian tunnels and steal the secret of the WebMind. A challenging tactical game from the designer of GODSFIRE. *$2.95, or $2.50 to TSG subscribers.*

OLYMPICA

MicroGame 8...

G.E.V.

Sequel to OGRE — a game of armor and infantry combat set in the same future. More complex and challenging than OGRE — includes larger, 2-color terrain map. Fully compatible with OGRE.



$3.95 — $3.50 for TSG subscribers.

MicroGame 4...

WarpWar

A game of interstellar maneuver and tactical combat. Players design their own ships — each with its own offensive, defensive, and movement capabilities — and battle with a unique *diceless* combat system. To win, you must *outguess* your opponent by anticipating his tactics. *$2.95 — $2.50 for TSG subscribers.*

Please send me the following games. I have enclosed full payment: $3.95 for each G.E.V. ($3.50 for *The Space Gamer* subscribers) and $2.95 for each other game ($2.50 for *TSG* subscribers), plus 50¢ for postage.

If you're not already subscribing to *The Space Gamer*, Metagaming's magazine for the science fiction and fantasy game fan, why not do it now? Starting immediately — and for as long as you subscribe — you'll get discount prices on all Metagaming products. And *TSG* brings you game articles, variants, fiction, and more!

Subscribe today. One year (6 issues) costs $8. Two years (12 issues) costs $15.

.....OGRE .....G.E.V. .....MELEE .....WarpWar .....OLYMPICA .....ICE WAR ..... years *TSG*

Name..... *Address*..... *State* ..... *Zip*.....

Send to:
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Box 15346
Austin, TX 78761

Hey Kids, Let's Play
POND WAR

by

Allen Varney

1.0 INTRODUCTION

POND WAR is a realistic simulation of the invasion of a peaceful frog pond by a powerful force of 14 year-old boys. The Boys Player attempts to capture and Mash as many bullfrogs as possible and thus accumulate as many Toad Points (or TP) as possible, while the Frogs Player attempts to avoid this object and, by setting "bug-bombs," tries to destroy the Boys Player or, at the very least, give him warts. Players move, resolve combat, eat flies, and raise (or kidnap) tadpoles. Scenarios include *FROGLEG!; HOP, SKIP, AND JUMP; RIBBIT!;* and a solitaire scenario, *FROGS SIT AROUND DOING NOTHING.*

This game system is compatible with previous games in this series, including **POND WAR IN THE EAST** and **THE PLOT TO ASSASSINATE KERMIT.**

2.0 EQUIPMENT

Your game of **POND WAR** should include the following components:

1-17.586" x 567" mapsheet (white)
1-counter sheet (400,000 counters)
This rules booklet (of course, dummy)
2-dice
Tadpole Production Schedule
Jeans
Johnny Astro Ray Blaster Set
Farberware Blender
Frogs (add water)

Should any of these components be missing, tough!

3.0 SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

POND WAR is played in Game-Turns, each of which is divided into two Player Phases, each of which is in turn divided into three Player Sub-Phases, each of which in turn follows three steps: (1) Player decides what to do; (2) Player does it; (3) Player goes on to the next Phase, or sits around waiting for the other player to begin *his* Phase. (Players interested in further description of the game-sequence are referred to S. Freud, *General Psychoanalysis & Psychology.)*

The sequence of game-events is as follows:

1. *Pick Winner.* Flip coin.
2. *Winner Agrees to Play Anyway After Loser Threatens.*
3. *Lily Pad Sabotage Phase.* Frogs Player secretly designates which Lily Pad Hexes will contain bug-bombs. Of course, since the Frogs Player doesn't write down the hex-numbers anywhere, he can pretty much pick and choose as the Boys Player steps on one.

BOYS PLAYER PHASE:

4. *Boys Player Movement Sub-Phase.* Boys Player moves to the other side of the game map. Then he moves his counters as far as their Wading Allowance will permit. Players move counters one at a time, obeying stacking restrictions (see 7.0). Once a counter has been moved a player may not move it again that turn. Unless he feels like it.

4.5 *Boys Player Mashing Sub-Phase.* Boys Player rolls the dice and consults the Combat Results Table (not included) to find out whether any Frogs have been Mashed. Any Boy that has Mashed a Frog in the previous Frog-Mashing Sub-Phase may not move during the next turn, in order to clean off his shoes.

5. *Mosquitoes Sub-Phase.* Frogs Player rolls on the Mosquito Chart (not included) to determine how many Bites (if any) the boys have suffered.

FROGS PLAYER PHASE:

6. *Frogs Movement Sub-Phase.* Frogs Player may hop his counters about as he sees fit, obeying stacking restrictions (see 7.0), up to the limit of each counter's Bounce Allowance (or BA). Frogs which have been determined during the previous turn to have heard a Mating Call (see 5.0) may hop up to twice their normal BA (normal for a frog, anyway) but must make their way BY THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE POSSIBLE to the nearest Female Frog (not included). Frogs are considered sexually frustrated at all times and will stop at nothing (except an Enemy ZOC; see 5.0).
7. *Wart Sub-Phase.* Frogs upon which attacks have been attempted (in Phase 4) are allowed to attempt Warting on the Boys Player. See enclosed Wart Venom Recipe.
8. *Frog Seduction Sub-Phase.* Boys Player rolls on the Mating Call Table (not included) to determine which frogs are Frustrated for the next turn.
9. *Victory Phase.* One player wins. Play continues.
10. *Game-Turn Indication Phase.* Not included.

4.0 MOVEMENT

The mapsheet depicts an area of swamp about the size of my backyard. There are five kinds of terrain depicted on the map: Land, Marsh, Swamp, Even Swampier Yet, and Underwater. Don't worry about all these; terrain has no effect on anything at all. The mapsheet has a hex-grid superimposed upon it to regularize movement. I don't know why, since the hexes have nothing to do with the movement system of **POND WAR**; that's just the way it came from the print-

er's. The Frogs Player determines the Bounce Allowance (BA) by the following procedure: Buy a Frog. Put it on the floor and tell it you like fresh frog's legs for dinner. The length of the resulting jump, expressed in feet and inches, is the Standard BA for all Frog counter. The Boys Player has an unlimited Wading Allowance (or WA) and can move anywhere he wants to . . . after all, what's a Frog going to do to stop him?

Players are PROHIBITED from entering the Enemy's Zone of Control. AT ALL TIMES!

5.0 MATING CALLS

When the Frogs Player is answering a Mating Call (see Sub-Phase 8, Section 3.0), the FP MUST move immediately to the nearest Female Frog (which doesn't exist, but he doesn't know that, poor devil). He MUST stop upon entering an Enemy Zone of Control (or ZOC). The Frog Player function at double BA and Warting Strength when in the Boys Player's ZOC.

6.0 ZONES OF CONTROL

Units do *not* exert Zones of Control over Enemy units.

7.0 STACKING

All units must stack in the same hex at the end of each Movement Phase.

8.0 MOSQUITOES

Mosquitoes are loathsome, nasty, crawly things that make little whiney noises when they fly, and they're hunched-over and ugly and malevolent, yes, truly EVIL, I *know*, because they come in the night when you're asleep or least expect it, stealthily whine in and land on your bare skin and probe about and then they finally sink in their needle, and they puncture your skin and then they DRINK YOUR BLOOD! *Vampires!* I hate them, I tell you, *hate* them, and they hate me, too, they know I'm out to rid the Earth of their kind of *disgusting vermin,* and it's hard, so very *very* hard, you know sometimes I wonder whether one man alone can really do it, sometimes I think, I think--Oh, never mind! Just go on to the next section and mind your own business!

9.0 BUG-BOMBS

COMMENTARY

The Frogs discovered early on that certain kinds of insects, when mixed with frog saliva, are transformed into a powerful explosive. This made for dire peril for the Boys (and the Frogs, too).

GENERAL RULE

Any Frog Counter may set a bug-bomb in a LilyPad Hex by remaining in that hex for two consecutive turns.

CASES

(9.1) A bug-bomb is considered active IMMEDIATELY on the first turn a Frog begins to set in. Any unit, of either side, which enters or remains in the designated LilyPad Hex (see 9.56) is considered to have set off the bomb (see 9.2).

(9.2) See 9.3

(9.3) Bug-bombs explode with a force of 27 megatons. When one goes off, all counters are removed from the board and the game is over (see 17.0). This rule can make for some interesting strategies; see 13.0, PLAYER'S NOTES.

(9.4) In some cases the exploded bug-bomb is considered to have made the swamp RADIOACTIVE and players may not play POND WAR again for 25,000 years. See 24.0, FALLOUT.

10.0 TOAD POINTS

COMMENTARY

It should be clear to anybody that income taxes in this country are too high! Why does the government require all that money when all they do is *waste* it! And Congress, look at Congress! That bunch of clowns should be run out of-- Oh, excuse me. That's the wrong commentary, isn't it?

GENERAL RULE

"Toad Points" are gained by the Boys Player (and ONLY the BP) by achieving various goals during the course of the game. The number of TP to be accumulated depends on the scenario being played. TP are allocated as follows:

(10.1) TOAD TABLE

For each Frog Mashed: 1 TP.
For each Mosquito Bite suffered: subtract 1 TP.
For each Bug-bomb avoided: 3 TP.
For each Frog Frustrated: 5 TP.
For beating the Frogs Player 3 or more times in a row and calling him nasty names: 6 TP.
For provoking the Frogs Player into assaulting you: 10 TP.
For vandalizing the Frogs Player's furniture: 20 TP (per room).
For having an illicit love affair with the Frogs Player's wife: 30 TP (per week without getting found out).
For burning down the Frogs Player's house: 300 TP.
For murdering the Frogs Player and not getting caught: 1000 TP. (NOTE: A player who gets caught loses ALL his TP.)

(9.2) Whoever has more TP at the end of the game wins.

11.0 DEAD FROGS

Dead frogs float belly-up--not back-up, as some gamers have believed in the past.

12.0 SCENARIOS COMMENTARY

It is the sincere belief of the designer of **POND WAR** that wargamers are at their most brilliant, original, and creative, and hence at their *best,* when they are designing their *own* scenarios for their wargames. With this in mind, I make only a few explanatory notes and comments on each of the scenarios described, and I encourage all budding game-designers (and who out there *hasn't* wanted to design his own game at one time, eh, kids?) to choose their own forces, starting position, victory conditions, handicaps, game length, etc. Have fun!

(12.1) FROGLEG!

The Boys Player attempts to Mash as many Frogs as possible.

(12.2) HOP, SKIP, AND JUMP

The Boys Player attempts to Mash as many Frogs as possible.

(12.3) RIBBIT!

The Frogs and Boys team up to fight the Nazis. (This one is even more fun on a PANZERBLITZ board.)

(12.4) Solitaire Scenario: FROGS SIT AROUND AND DO NOTHING.

Especially recommended for beginners.

13.0 PLAYER'S NOTES

These notes are intended as guides to the player who is unsure of how to approach **POND WAR.** They were assembled from the designer's educated guesses, the playtesters' uneducated guesses, and purely-intuitive shots-in-the-dark from anyone who felt like saying something.

Both Players: Since the winner is determined before the game even begins, pure luck (or skill in flipping the coin) plays an important part in **POND WAR**; and, afterwards, the loser is working under a severe handicap. The only course to take in this case is to make the best showing possible while you lose (experience taught the playtesters that losing didn't hurt as much when they had wiped out the winner's entire force).

Boys Player: Mash as many Frogs as possible. Many strategies become apparent when the Boys Player simply decides not to follow the rules. Cheating can greatly facilitate one's play: removing opposing counters from the board while the Enemy is distracted; switching sides at a moment's notice; throwing loaded dice (a tried and true practice); and, when things are going especially badly for you, paying your kid brother to come in and kick over the board so you have to start over. Playing the game honestly has its points too, of course, but remember, you're playing to WIN!

Frog Player: When things look bad, set off a bug-bomb.

14.0 DESIGNER'S NOTES

POND WAR, believe it or not, was my first attempt at designing a game. I was amazed at how easy it is. Wargamers used to more traditional games will notice several unusual innovations in the **POND WAR** system. For instance, the rule about stacking provoked a lot of comment during playtesting. Certainly it does indeed limit movement if all the counters on both sides have to be in the same hex at the end of every Movement Phase; but in my studies of gamers (and I watched them at play intensively for nearly three days before I sat down and wrote *POND WAR*) I've observed that most players are mainly interested in just moving their counters to the battle and leaving them there while they beat the heck out of each other. This rule just streamlines the process. Also, gamers will do well to remember that, while the stacking rule hinders you, it doesn't do your opponent any good either.

Another concept new to gaming that a surprisingly large number of testers found difficult to grasp was the rule about picking the winner right off the bat. Well, in the aforementioned observation period I noticed a lot of easily-excitable people getting all worked up during the course of the game because of the suspense of "Who will win?" This is very unhealthy for one's system and is a sure path to high blood pressure, heart attacks, and kidney disease. So gamers no longer have to endure this stress, but can still have fun, if they know who the winner will be before they even sit down (and after a few games they get the knack of not caring about the outcome).

Finally, all the rules booklets I've read lately have dealt with, first, the causes, and secondly, the problems involved in creating a new game, and the designers have been refreshingly frank. In this spirit, let me tell you a little about the cause of **POND WAR.** We were all sitting in the bar one night and Charlie said, "Hey! There's got to be an easier way to make money than being stockbrokers!" And we thought for a while and Harv said there was a lot of money in the kind of games his kid plays nowadays. I looked into the situation the next day at the toy shop, and I said to myself, "My God! These kids will buy *anything*!" So I watched Harv's kid play his games with his little friends, then went home and wrote **POND WAR.** As easy as writing a letter.

So there you have the cause for creating this new game: to make a fast buck. If there are any problems with it, they're yours, turkeys.

15.0 DESIGN CREDITS

Game Design: **Walter Hesselman Jr.**
Game Development: **Charlie Norman, Harv Presnell**
Playtesting: **All the fine people at Merrill-Lynch's Milwaukee office---thanks, gang!**
Physical Systems and Graphics: **Milwaukee Presto-print**
Acknowledgements: **Ethel Hesselman (kiss-kiss!) and my boss Mr. Jacobs, who understood.**

ADDING FEAR AND LOATHING TO G.E.V.

by

Timothy C. Wiedel, Ph.D.

G.E.V. is an excellent addition to Metagaming's MicroGame series, and an exciting expansion of the OGRE rules system. Below I have added a few optional rule modifications which can help to add a little more anxiety to the G.E.V. game. Some of us gamers like to feel a little adrenalin in our veins from time to time.

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Ogre?

One thing I miss in G.E.V. is the ramming rule in the OGRE game (oh, I know it's more realistic Steve, but a guy has to have some fun once in a while), which disrupts or kills everything on the board. In G.E.V., units involved in an overrun (same as ramming in OGRE) get to fire back and forth in fire rounds with infantry and Ogre being doubled. If you have an Ogre, all of the units are going to get to fire at you before you can squash them. A number of infantry squads can be especially deadly. Now, I'm not saying this couldn't happen, but they would have to be very brave men to stand up and fire faster than an Ogre. In combat situations, men often panic and freeze, unable to fire--especially if they aren't under cover and there's an Ogre Mark IV coming at them. A similar argument can be advanced when the Ogre is overunning a vehicle. Is the small computer in a heavy tank going to fire its guns faster and more accurately than the large cybernetic computer of the Ogre? To put a little fear into the heart of the defender when an Ogre is present, you might want to incorporate the following optional first fire overrun rules into your G.E.V. games.

OP 10.01 **INFANTRY PANIC:** When being overrun by an Ogre or when overrunning an Ogre, infantry must roll a number on one die equal to or less than the total number of adjusted infantry strength points (S.P.) for terrain in a hex. (Thus 1 S.P. of infantry in a town hex has to roll 3 or less to fire.) If this number is rolled, the infantry may then fire at the Ogre in the first and subsequent fire rounds. Obviously if there are six or more adjusted strength points of infantry, panic is not rolled for, and firing is normal (as per the G.E.V. rules) until destruction.

OP 10.011 **INFANTRY:** Units which do not pass the panic die roll may try again in the beginning of the second fire round, with what is left of the infantry strength points. The infantry may continue to try to pass the panic test at the beginning of each fire round until they are all destroyed. But they may never fire until they do pass the test.

OP 10.02 **OGRE FIRST FIRE:** All other units (except another Ogre) which are overrun by, or attempt to overrun, an Ogre, must roll a 4 or less on one die in order to fire on the first fire round. If they survive they may automatically fire on the second round and all subsequent rounds (as per the G.E.V. rules).

Why Not Give Your Missile Tanks some Teeth?

The Ogre is equipped with excellent missiles but what ever happened to the poor missile tank? A missile tank should be able to carry the same type of missile as the Ogre. For a missile tank which will make your enemy think twice, you might want to try these optional rules.

OP 10.03 **HEAVY MISSILE TANK:** Has one missile launcher and may carry two 6/5 missiles (same missile armament as an Ogre), instead of the usual missile tank attack strength and range. It costs the same as a regular missile tank. When both missiles have been fired the tank is assumed to have a nominal attack strength of 1 (because of HMG) in an overrun situation only; it has no other attack strength but it does still have the normal defense strength.

OP 10.031 **EFFECT OF DISRUPTION** Missile tanks may not fire missiles while they are disrupted. A disrupted missile tank is assumed to have an attack strength of one in an overrun situation.

Why are G.E.V.s the Only Units Who Can Play in the Water?

The G.E.V. rules give only G.E.V.s both water mobility and water combat effectiveness. Ogres can go under the river. But the poor infantry has to swim. Certainly with a technology that can produce Ogres and infantry jump suits something could be done to give the infantry both water mobility and water combat capability. If you would like to have water mobility for your units, you might try these optional rules.

OP 10.04 **UNDERWATER INFANTRY** Special infantry may fight and move underwater using a jet propulsion unit and special weapons. Each factor of underwater infantry costs 2 infantry S.P. and its loss is the same as losing 2 S.P. You should mark the infantry unit with a "U" to indicate its special status.

OP 10.041 **MOVEMENT:** Underwater infantry can move two river hexes per turn but only one land hex (unless they are being transported or are on a road). To go into the water they must start their turn on a land hex or bridge adjacent to the river or swamp (the swamp counts as a river hex for these units). To leave the water they must start the turn adjacent to the land hex and stop when they reach the first land hex.

OP 10.042 **COMBAT:** Underwater infantry may *not* make normal attacks while they are in a water hex. However, they are tripled in overrun attacks against units in a water hex (includes Ogres at the river bottom). In water they always defend with double their defense strength, and on

land they attack and defend as normal infantry.

OP 10.05 **VEHICLE FLOTATION:** All mobile units (other than Ogres) can cross water hexes with the help of flotation devices, which all units are assumed to carry.

OP 10.051 **RIVER MOVEMENT:** To float on the water a unit must end its turn adjacent to a water hex (units may not float on or off of swamp hexes); on the next turn it may move one water hex per turn. To move off the water a unit must be adjacent to a land hex; it may move one hex on land and stop until the next turn, when it can move normally.

OP 10.052 **DISRUPTION AND DEFENSE:** Disrupted units may not move on or off of the water; however, if on the water they may still float one hex per turn. All units floating on the water have a defense strength of 0.

Random Scenario Selection

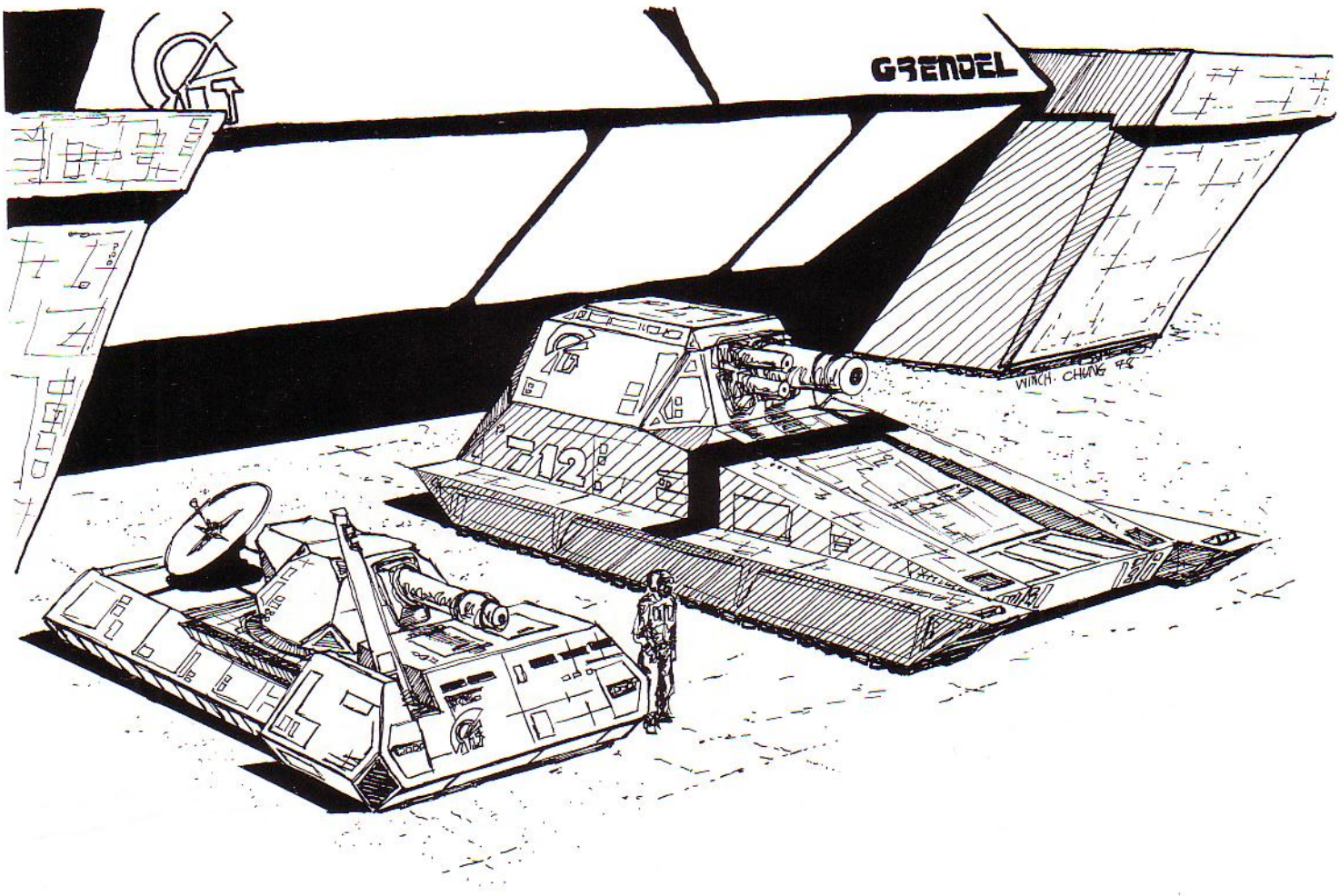
For those who have played all the G.E.V. scenarios already, I have included a random selection scenario series that gives over 216 different combinations. This should keep you busy for awhile. A similar system first appeared in the Avalon Hill game SQUAD LEADER. The system allows each player to compose his own attacking force and the player with the lowest point total plays as the attacker with his force. The player with the highest point total plays with the defending force randomly selected in the scenario.

OP 10.06 **SELECTION OF DEFENDING FORCE:** A player must roll a die to determine the defending force both players will be bidding to attack.

DIE ROLL	DEFENDING FORCE
1	24 Infantry S.P. 3 Howitzers 2 Mobile Howitzers
2	1 Ogre Mark IV 12 Infantry S.P.
3	6 Heavy Tanks 6 Missile Tanks 6 Light Tanks 6 G.E.V.s 2 Mobile Howitzers
4	15 Infantry S.P. 6 G.E.V.s 2 Howitzers
5	1 Ogre Mark IV 6 G.E.V.s
6	18 Infantry S.P. 4 Heavy Tanks 4 Missile Tanks 6 Light Tanks

OP 10.061 **SELECTION OF VICTORY CONDITIONS:** A player must roll a die to determine the victory conditions for the attacking force. For the defender to win he must prevent the attacking force from fulfilling the victory conditions.

DIE ROLL	ATTACKER VICTORY CONDITIONS
1	Eliminate all defending units. (An Ogre must be immobilized.)
2	Destroy command post (the defender gets 1 Gamma command post which he may place anywhere on the board) and have a unit point loss total less than or equal to the defender.



3	Control Road--No enemy units within firing range of road from Hex 2014 to Hex 0813 at the end of the game.
5	Occupy bridge hexes (2114, 1306, 1321) and have no enemy units within firing range of these hexes at the end of the game.
6	The side with the lowest unit point loss total wins the game.

OP 10.062 **SELECTION OF ATTACKER BOARD ENTRY:** A player must roll a die to determine where the attacking force will enter the game board. (NOTE: If "in column" is specified the attacker must enter each unit on the road, although he may stack. Thus the first stack of units would enter the board with no movement penalty. The second stack would lose 1 road movement point, the third stack two road movement points, and so on.)

DIE ROLL	ATTACKER ENTERS:
1	South edge--anywhere
2	Hex 2331, in column
3	East edge--anywhere
4	West edge--anywhere
5	Hex 3024, in column
6	North edge--anywhere

OP 10.063 **SELECTION OF GAME LENGTH:** A player must roll a die to determine the length of the game. To win the attacker must fulfill his victory conditions by the last game turn.

DIE ROLL	GAME LENGTH
1	9 turns
2	10 turns
3	11 turns
4	12 turns
5	13 turns
6	14 turns

OP 10.064 **SPECIAL RULES**

Do not use evacuation rule.

The defender can set up anywhere on the board, EXCEPT that he may not set up on hexes adjacent to the side of the board on which the attacker will enter.

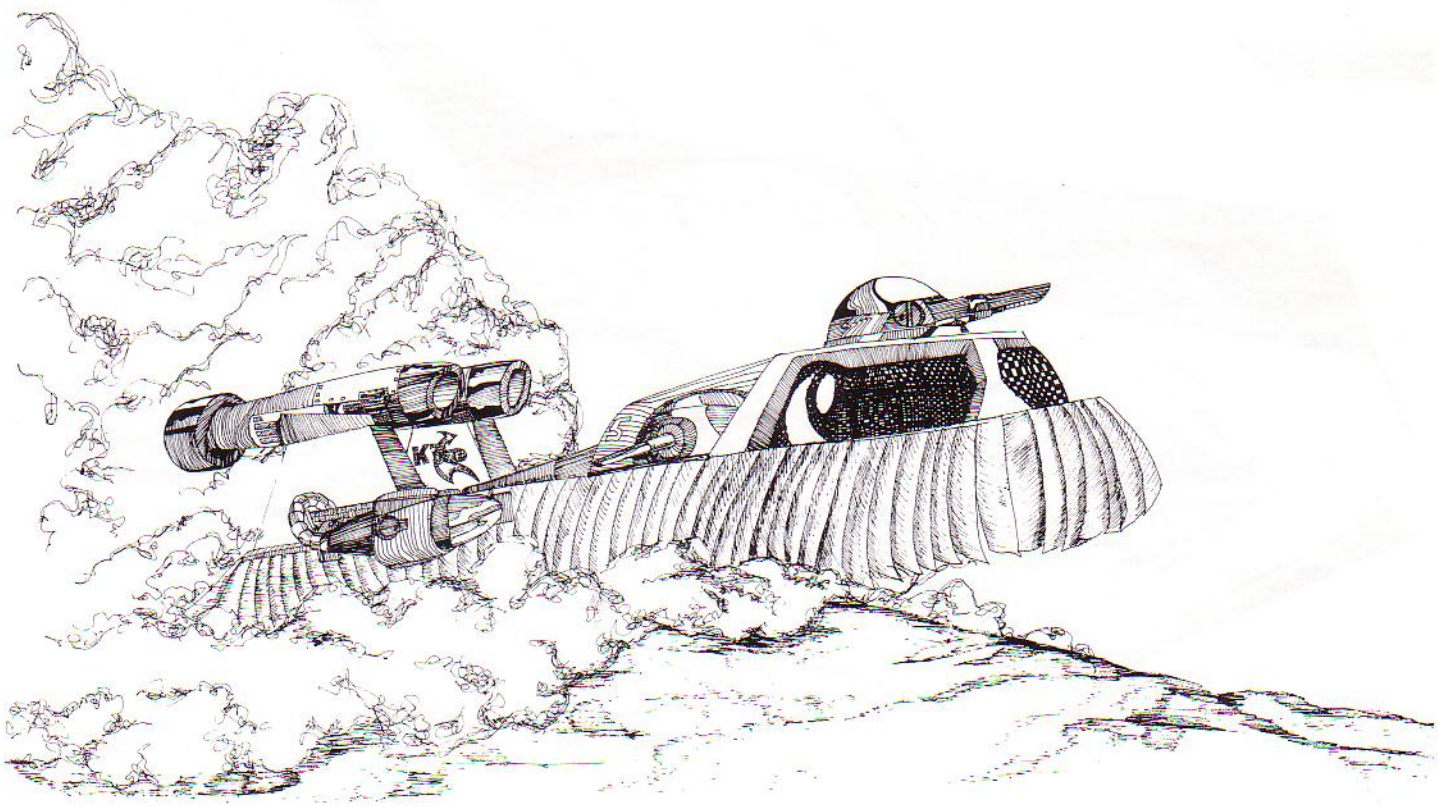
The defender sets up first with all of his counters turned over. The counters are turned face up at the conclusion of the attacking player's first movement phase.

The attacker moves first.

The attacker does not have to bring all of his units on the board the first turn.

OP 10.065 **BIDDING FOR THE ATTACKING FORCE:** After the composition of the defending force, victory conditions, attacker hex entry, and game length have been determined each player secretly develops an attacking force to achieve the victory conditions. Unit cost is determined by using the unit point losses on page 16 of the G.E.V. rules. For example, an Ogre Mark IV costs 105 points (obtained by adding up the point losses for treads and weapons), a G.E.V. 6 points, and each infantry S.P. 2 points. Next, each player totals the number of points in his attacking force. Players show each other their point totals and the player with the lowest unit point total will be the attacker, using his attacking force. The player with the highest unit point total must play the defender using the defending force which was selected by the die roll. (NOTE: It is a good idea for each player to check the other's arithmetic--errors in addition, especially in the downward direction are not uncommon.)

See if these rules change the taste of your beer and pretzels.



IMPERIUM & WarpWar

Made For Each Other?

by

William A. Peterson

Even before IMPERIUM came out, I knew it was going to have some similarities to WarpWar. Just how close these similarities would be, I wasn't to find out until a few weeks ago, when I received my copy of IMPERIUM. Before I proceed, let me go back and describe these two games briefly:

WarpWar ($2.95 from Metagaming) is MicroGame No. 4, and follows the standard MicroGame format. The board is small, representing a small sector of only 28 stars. It is on the map that the first similarities between the two games become apparent. Both games make use of pre-established 'Warplines' by means of which instantaneous travel between linked stars is possible. As to the rules, WarpWar uses a simplified economics system in order to allow players to design their own ships. The board is used for only a small portion of the actual play, as combat is resolved in a 'paper-and-pencil' manner using a straight comparison matrix (i.e., given a set of circumstances, x, a given result, y, will *always* occur). Thus, the emphasis in WarpWar is on *tactics.*

IMPERIUM ($11.98 from Conflict Games) is a boxed game with a mounted board and fully die-cut counters. Ship types and starting forces are pre-determined, and combat is by die-roll (1-4 your ship is unaffected, and 5 or 6 it blows up). The comparison has been made to a streamlined version of STELLAR CONQUEST, and it's apt. Both the economics and the combat lie somewhere between SC and WarpWar. The primary emphasis of IMPERIUM, however, is on *strategy.* While the differences between WarpWar and IMPERIUM are many, these differences serve to make the two games *complementary,* rather than opposed. The rest of this article shall deal with ways of bringing these two games together, as well as improving each of them separately. However, I would like to add the following disclaimer: all of the following rules modifications are variants, and have not undergone the same level of playtesting which the original rules have undergone. Use them at your own risk, but I don't believe you'll have many problems.

Variations on a theme: IMPERIUM

Before trying to integrate WarpWar's combat rules, I would like to suggest the following optional system for determining the range in IMPERIUM's standard combat system. 1) Assign each ship type a Manuever rating, as per table A. 2) Each side then rolls a die and notes the number. 3) As firing allocations are made, also determine the range. If both players agree as to what the range will be, that is the range. However, if disagreement exists, add the number of the die roll (2, above) to the respective ships' manuever rating, and the player with the highest total shall decide. 4) In case of a tie, the decision will be made by die roll. 5) Apply the following modifiers; a) Subtract 2 from the M.R., if a ship is disrupted due to poor maintenance. b) Add 3 to the M.R., if the player decides in favor of long range, on the first combat round *only.* Note: In battles where one side greatly outnumbers the other, this system might entail some paperwork as both range and ship allocation must be determined before combat can be resolved, and range must be determined for each pair of ships, not just once per round for both sides. I think that the increase in "accuracy" tends to offset any such inconvenience, however.

As to playing IMPERIUM with the combat rules from WarpWar, there is no real problem. Simply convert the ship counters in IMPERIUM to WarpWar statistics, use WarpWar rules during the Space Combat Subphases, IMPERIUM rules for everything else, and prepare for a very long game. For an example of WarpWar statistics for IMPERIUM ships, see Table B.

WarpWar variations:

Again, I have some suggestions to improve WarpWar without necessarily combining it with IMPERIUM. The first of these is the concept of Reserve Power Allocation. As orders are written, a player may allocate power factors to his 'reserves'. This power may then be added to the various ship systems to increase their effectiveness. Reserve Power may not be transferred to Beams or Tubes, nor to any system which does not already have *some* power already allocated to it. Power in reserves is released as follows: After combat tactics and weapons fire of each ship is known (i.e., Attack & fire beam, or Dodge & fire missiles) power may be transferred to screens. Note, that while this does not let you know what your opponent's beam strength or drive allocation are, it does tell you what's coming your way (if anything), including how many missiles. After this, both sides reveal beam strength, targets and drive allocations of their missiles (beam targets are revealed before screens are increased), and initial drive allocations for ships. Any power remaining in reserve may be used to change that ships' drive setting, *either up or down.* Combat is then resolved in the normal manner, using the altered screen and drive values. Obviously, this rule is intended primarily for advanced WarpWar players. Other rule changes for the advanced game are as follows: Technological levels are now more applicable to beams and screens, than before. For every tech. level over '0', increase beam or screen effectiveness by 1/3. Thus, a 5-point beam at tech level 3 will do 10 points of damage, and a 7-point screen at tech level 2 will absorb 35/3, or 12 points of damage (7+14/3=11 2/3= 12 rounded up).

Another way to add mystery to WarpWar is to use different types of

technology; at the beginning of the game, each player decides whether to use the standard, beam, or missile technology pattern. Standard pattern uses normal WarpWar rules. Beam pattern uses a screen that allows beams to pass through both ways, and missiles neither (the screen can only protect from missile damage). Missile pattern allows the ship to stop beam damage with screens, and fire missiles through screens (but not beams). Additionally, a player may reserve two technology levels and use them to purchase screens that will allow fire of, and protection from, either weapon type. This is instead of the damage bonuses normally allowed for those two tech levels, and is expensive.

Playing WarpWar on the IMPERIUM board is, if anything, simpler than using WarpWar combat rules for IMPERIUM. The Empire starts out with three worlds and seven outposts, placed as per the rules to IMPERIUM. The Terrans get three worlds and three outposts, and both get Resource Units as per IMPERIUM. R.U.'s may be used to purchase non-ship items at IMPERIUM prices, or ships at WarpWar prices. Movement, combat and the turn-sequence are as for WarpWar (1 R.U. = 1 Build Pt.), and other rules are determined as to whether the activity involves planetary interaction or not. WarpWar counters should be used.

For a nice, short game, you can also play IMPERIUM on the WarpWar board. Count Mosul, Ur, Larsu, Niveneh, Ugarit & Babylon as home worlds, all other stars as secondary systems. Use the WarpWar Advanced scenario for resource units and victory conditions. Player who gets second choice of who moves first decides whether to use Imperial or Terran ships. All other rules are as for IMPERIUM, except for Ground Combat (optional) and Imperial Intervention (deleted).

TABLE A

MANUEVER RATINGS	SHIP TYPES
1 pt.	Transport, Tanker Monitor & Dreadnaught
2 pts.	Battleship & Improved Dreadnaught
3 pts.	Attack & Heavy Cruisers
4 pts.	Strike Cruiser & Mother Ship
5 pts.	Light Cruiser
6 pts.	Destroyer & Missile Boat
7 pts.	Scout & Fighter

TABLE B:

SHIP TYPE	WARP:	BEAM:	SCREENS:	TUBES:	MISSILES:	RACKS:	POWER:
COMMON							
TRANSPORTS	YES	0	1	0	0	(1)	5
TANKERS	YES	0	1	0	0	(1)	5
TERRANS							
FIGHTERS	NO	2	2	1	3	0	10
MONITORS	NO	9	8	0	0	(1)	17
MISSILE BOATS	YES	0	1	6	18	0	12
SCOUTS	YES	2	1	0	0	0	12
DESTROYERS	YES	3	2	1	3	0	15
LT. CRUISERS	YES	5	4	1	3	0	18
STRIKE CRUISERS	YES	0	5	8	24	0	24
HEAVY CRUISERS	YES	6	6	6	18	0	24
DREADNOUGHTS	YES	10	7	9	27	(1)	25
BATTLESHIPS	YES	12	9	9	27	(1)	28
MOTHER SHIP	YES	0	2	0	0	3	12
IMPERIALS							
FIGHTERS	NO	1	2	2	6	0	9
MONITORS	NO	0	7	10	30	0	10
SCOUTS	YES	1	1	1	3	0	11
DESTROYERS	YES	2	2	2	6	0	14
LT. CRUISERS	YES	2	3	4	12	0	14
STRIKE CRUISERS	YES	2	4	7	21	0	23
HEAVY CRUISERS	YES	5	5	5	15	0	20
ATTACK CRUISERS	YES	7	5	5	15	0	24
DREADNOUGHTS	YES	4	8	9	27	(1)	20
IMP. DREADNOUGHTS	YES	6	8	10	30	(1)	28
BATTLESHIPS	YES	7	9	12	36	(1)	22
MOTHER SHIPS	YES	0	1	0	0	3	10

BINDING ARBITRATION

Yet Another Look At BFM

by

David James Ritchie

Ever since SPI released BATTLEFLEET MARS into the jungle of fan criticism, there has been an inordinant amount of grumbling concerning the arbitrary and seemingly random construction of BFM's victory conditions. A single die roll, argue the game's critics, is not a valid way to end a game. After several hours of intense concentration, the value of the experience is marred when one player checks his morale and finds out that he has just lost the game. So runs the reasoning of the critics.

Of course, BFM's unusual end-game involves much more than simply tossing bones in a blanket and seeing how they lie. The Morale Index forms a sort of odds table representing the relative performance of the players up to a given moment in time and it is by indexing the die roll with the proper box on that table that victory is determined at the same moment that the game ends. Not only is such an end-game consonant with justice in that it rewards good play about as often as good generalship is ever rewarded in reality, but it is perfectly valid within the premises of BFM's game reality. Given a limited war between disunited factions who suffer as much from the economic consequences of belligerency as from any battle damage which they may inflict on each other and given that both sides are prone to look at the dispute as civil in nature (i.e. as essentially a labor-management dispute), it would be likely that a "peace party" would rise up in each camp. It is further likely that such a party would find fertile ground in increasing war weariness, that a lowering of morale would strengthen their hand. As morale dropped, therefore, the peace party would increase its chances of achieving a negotiated settlement which might not end the war in their favor but which would at least end it.

So much for the validity of the single die roll as a means of bringing the game to an end. The question of morale as a criterion of victory is a bit thornier. While a lowering of morale may be the immediate cause of a cessation of hostilities, it is hardly the major factor in determining the nature of a negotiated settlement. Morale, after all, is a highly subjective element in anyone's calculations, especially when we are speaking of the morale of an entire civilian population rather than a regiment or brigade. Diplomats are more inclined to weigh the more measurable *blood and iron* capabilities of an enemy in the balance against what can be gained by a peace agreement. If your enemy can be easily brought to bay should he stalk out of negotiations, you naturally ask for more. If he is smart, your enemy gives you more without too much sabre-rattling. The morale of the opposing sides may be a factor in such calculations, but not the sole factor. Other factors besides morale and combat strength might include the amount of territory held by each side, expected delivery of combat hardware in the near future and, yes, the eloquence and stamina of each side's negotiators. In a situation in which democratic pressures or the interests of a third party in the dispute were material to the efforts of either side, propoganda proficiency would also be a factor.

Among the foregoing items of interest to diplomats trying to hammer out a peace agreement, it should be noted that one factor is conspicuous by its absence: the events of the war just passed. Once the struggle ends and the men in striped trousers sit down to dicker, the war's victories and catastrophies are usually forgotten. They seldom cast even the slightest shadow over the proceedings. Since BFM's Morale Indices are essentially a measure of past events as they affect the willingness of a population to suffer a continuation of the conflict, they could be interpreted as a valid measure of victory. However, a different system which meausres extant strength as well as "morale" would be more accurate and would have the benefit of placating those who remain unconvinced that a single die roll can be an acceptable way to decide who won a game. The following procedure is offered as one of many possible solutions to the problem.

Whenever a victory is rolled for either side, the result should be read as a peace feeler from the enemy camp's doves. Essentially, such a feeler would involve a proposal to sit down and bargain for a settlement. Since it would be absurd for players to simply sit down and argue over who won, a more objective system is in order. Let us, therefore, assume that the terms of any peace feelers involve a proposal for WORD to act as arbitrator of the dispute and that such arbitration is to be binding in nature. If we also assume that WORD is more apt to be concerned with making political hay out of having brought an end to the war than about the justice of either side, the dynamics of any peace conference become fairly cut and dried. WORD is likely to be swayed more by appeals to venality and threats of a resumption of the war in violation of the terms of the truce than by any other factors. The major factors in any settlement would thus revolve around the ability of the two sides to continue the war. Secondary factors would include agitprop and bribery by agents for the belligerents plus the skill of the negotiators in the game of diplomatic bluff.

Since it is not unknown for a peace feeler to be rejected, it would seem reasonable to allow a player to ignore such a result. The normal consequences of ignoring enemy attempts at securing a negotiated peace are, however, quite, stiff in that a refusal to negotiate often encourages the enemy to keep fighting ("They only want the peace of the slave quarter; better to die than submit").

Accordingly, if either side chooses to ignore a peace feeler from the enemy, the opposing player immediately adds 10 points to his morale rating. The supposition, here, is that a strong propaganda campaign would be mounted to inform the public of the refusal of the nefarious enemy to be reasonable.

Should a player choose to accept a peace feeler, the issue goes into immediate arbitration. Our standard of victory now becomes the relative bargaining strength of each side. As a measure of bargaining strength, use the following formula.

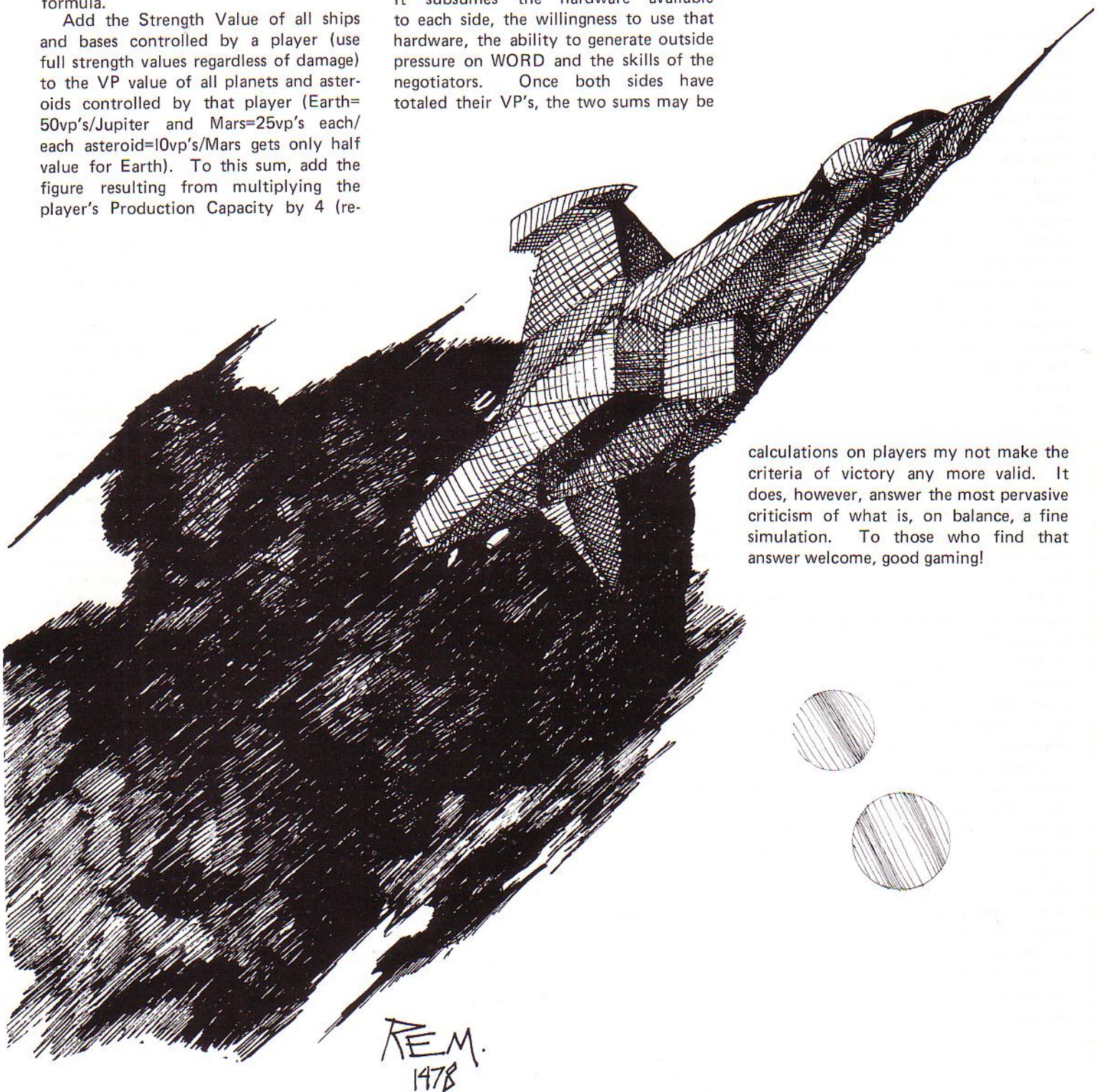
Add the Strength Value of all ships and bases controlled by a player (use full strength values regardless of damage) to the VP value of all planets and asteroids controlled by that player (Earth=50vp's/Jupiter and Mars=25vp's each/each asteroid=10vp's/Mars gets only half value for Earth). To this sum, add the figure resulting from multiplying the player's Production Capacity by 4 (representing the production which can be expected to accrue during the time when the peace conference is being organized). Next, add in the player's Morale Level. Finally, each player may designate a Prime Negotiator whose PPV is multiplied by 20. All other agents have their PPV multiplied by 10. The PPV's of all agents having been multiplied by the appropriate figure, the resultant number is added to the VP total. The result is a fairly clear estimation of the "blood and iron" available to each player in a real politic setting. It subsumes the hardware available to each side, the willingness to use that hardware, the ability to generate outside pressure on WORD and the skills of the negotiators. Once both sides have totaled their VP's, the two sums may be compared as a simplified ratio to determine the level of victory achieved by the side with the higher number of VP's. Use the following ratios:

Between 1.0 and 1.24 to1= MARGINAL VICTORY

Between 1.25 and 1.49 to 1 = SUB STANTIVE VICTORY

1.5 to 1 or greater = DECISIVE VICTORY

Reading MARTIAN VICTORY as ARES PEACE FEELER may not make BFM a better game and imposing detailed calculations on players my not make the criteria of victory any more valid. It does, however, answer the most pervasive criticism of what is, on balance, a fine simulation. To those who find that answer welcome, good gaming!



NEWS & PLUGS

GAMING CONVENTIONS:

WINTERCON VII: (Dec 1-3) Oakland Univ., Rochester, MI. Guest of Honor; Duke Seifried of Heritage Models. The convention staff is very professional and this should be an excellent con. Info: Send a SASE to Metro Detroit Gamers, WinterCon VII, PO Box 787, Troy, MI 48099.

WINTER WARGY 9: (Jan 6-7) Platte Community Technical College. Info: Rick Plankinton, RR 6 Box 52, Columbus, NE 68601.

ORCCON: (Jan 5-7) California State University at Fullerton. Tournaments, seminars, boardgames, miniatures, prizes, D&D, and auctions. Membership $3.50 pre-registered, $5 at the door. Make checks payable and send all inquiries to Alan Emrich, 2922 Angler Lane, Los Alamitos, CA 90720.

WINTER WAR VI: (Jan 19-21) University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. Tournaments include D&D, Diplomacy, miniatures and various board games. All tournaments have a $1 entry fee. Memberships: $2 for the three days or $1 per day. Info: Alan Conrad, 2215 S. First no.103, Champaign, IL 61820.

DUNDRACON IV: (Feb 17-19) Villa Hotel, San Mateo, California. Seminars, films, computers, tournaments, demonstrations, and miniatures. Convention staff has a fine record of good cons. Memberships: $8.50 to Feb 1, $10 after. Info: DunDraCon IV, 386 Alcatraz, Oakland, CA 94618.

GENCON SOUTH '79: (Feb 17-19) Jacksonville Hilton, Jacksonville, FL. Cowford Dragoons host this con, and the Dragoons put on a nice con for all of us south of the Mason-Dixie Line. Con covers all facets of wargaming. Info: Carl Smith, Jr., 5333 Santa Monica Blvd. N., Jacksonville, FL 32207.

SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTIONS:

MYSTERYCON: (Nov 24-26) Royal Coach, Houston, Texas. GoH: Rick Baker. Info: MysteryCon 3, PO Box 36451, Houston, TX 77036.

NUTRIACON: (Nov 30- Dec 2) Grand Hotel, New Orleans, LA. GoH: Karl Edward Wagner. Memberships: $9. Info: Tom Longo, 6221 Wadsworth, New Orleans, LA 70122.

CHATTACON 4: (Jan 5-7) Sheraton-Downtown, Chattanooga, TN. GoH: Alan Dean Foster. Mem: $7 to Dec 18, $9 after. Info: ChattaCon 4, PO Box 21173, Chattanooga, TN 37421.

CONFUSION: (Jan 19-21) West Bank Holiday Inn, Ann Arbor, MI. GoH: Spider and Jeanne Robinson. Mem: $6 to Jan 1, $8 after. Info: Karen Persello, 617 S. Forest no.4, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

WISCON 3: (Feb 2-4) Wisconsin Center, Madison, WI. GoHs: Suzy McKee Charnas and John Varley. Mem: $5 to Jan 15, $7 after. Info: WisCon 3, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701.

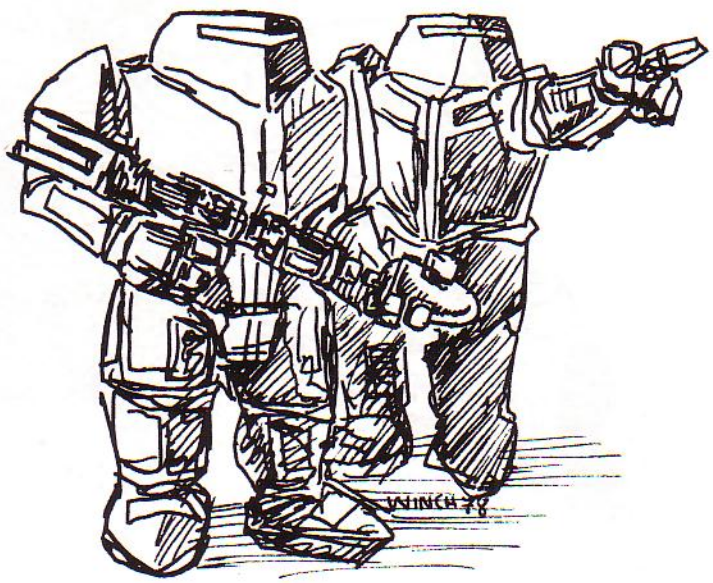
FORTCON: (Feb 9-11) Fort Collins, Colorado. GoH: James Gunn. Mem: $6. Info: Fort Con, CSU Student Center, Box 407, Ft. Collins, CO 80523.

BOSKONE XVI: (Feb 16-18) Sheraton-Boston Hotel. GoH: Frank Herbert. Mem: $8 to Jan 15, $10 after. Info: NESFA, Box G, MIT Br. PO, Cambridge, MA 02139.

FIFTH ASSEMBLEE of THE FRIENDS of the ENGLISH REGENCY: (March 10-11) Sheraton Townhouse, Los Angeles, CA. The Friends are interested in the Regency Period of England (1800-1820). Mem: $20 to Dec 1, $22 after. Info: Friends of the English Regency, 5228 Miles Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

AGGIECON X: (March 29 - April1) Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. GoH: Theodore Sturgeon, Guest Artist: Boris. Membership: $5 till March 16, $6 after. This is the best SF convention held in the state of Texas, and all fans should make their plans now to attend. For more info, write: AggieCon X, Memorial Student Center, Box 5718, College Station, TX 77844.

LUNACON '79: (March 29- April 1) Sheraton Inn at LaGuardia, New York City. GoH: Ron Goulart. Mem: $7.50 to March 15, $9.50 after. Info: LunaCon '79, c/o Walter Cole, 1171 East 8th St., Brooklyn, NY 11230.



GAMING NEWS:

Awards:

The Charles Roberts Awards for 1978 were presented at Origins '78 in Ann Arbor. The winners were:

Best Tactical Game: SQUAD LEADER
Best Strategic Game: VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC
Best Professional Zine: STRATEGY & TACTICS
Best Semi-Professional Zine: SPACE GAMER (Thank you)
All Time Best Fantasy Board Game: WAR OF THE RING
Hall of Fame: REDMOND SIMONSEN

John Young dead:

In the Signal no.136, it was reported that John Young had died. He was the designer of Borodino and other fine games. The cause of death was kidney failure.

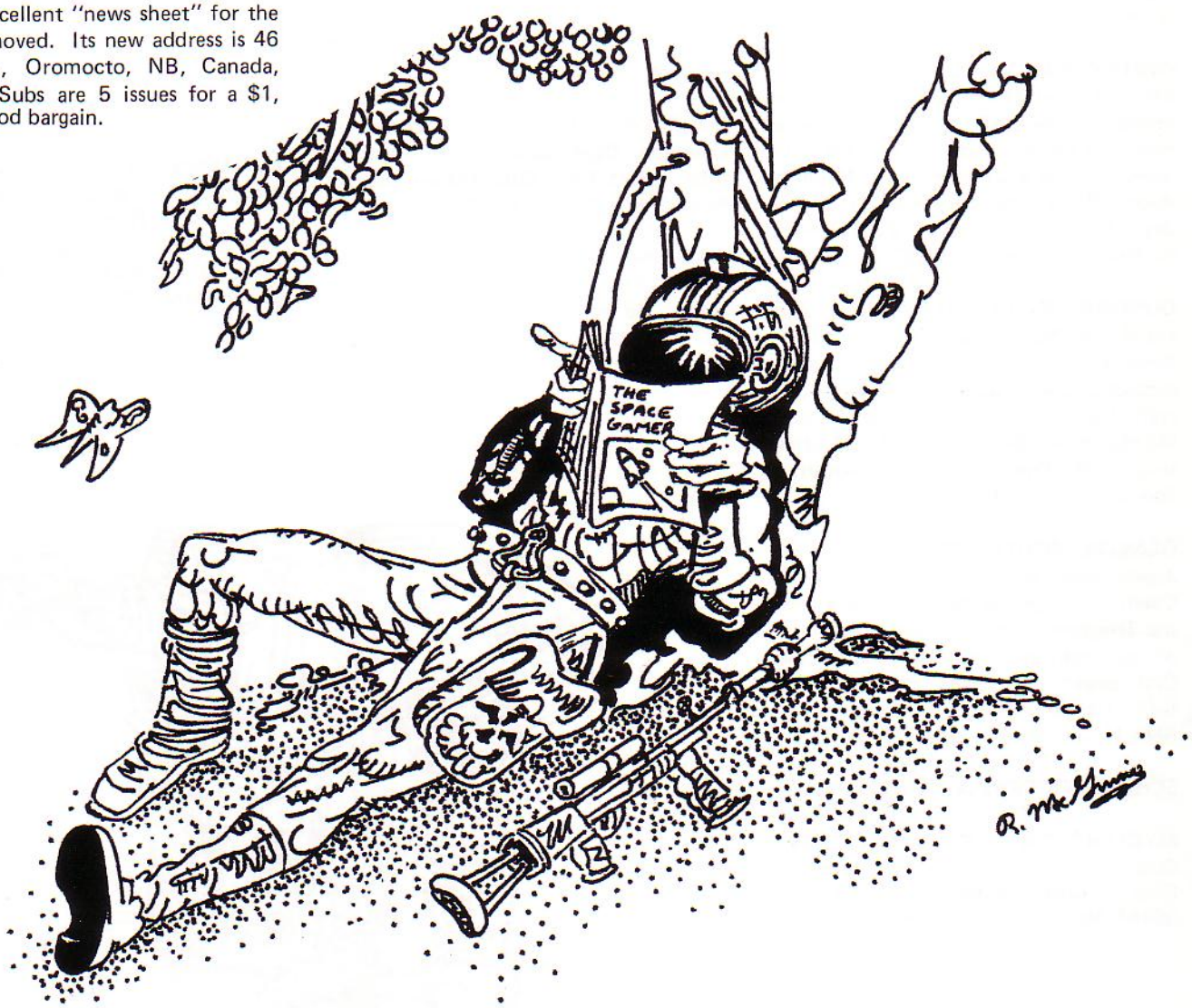
Signal, an excellent "news sheet" for the hobby has moved. Its new address is 46 Carleton St., Oromocto, NB, Canada, E2V 2C8. Subs are 5 issues for a $1, which is a good bargain.

CHAOSIUM addition:

The CHAOSIUM, as reported in Wyrms Footnotes Five (single issue $1.50, 5/$6), has hired Lynn Willis as a full-time member of its staff. Lynn designed GodsFire and Olympica for Metagaming. Congratulations to Lynn.

Micro-tournament: Winners of the Ohio Valley Wargaming Association's Micro-trounament were Bob Cline in the Ogre/GEV game, Jeff Griggs in the Melee contest, and David Griggs in the Wizard competition. We thank the OVWA for putting on the tournament, and we also thank Guy McLimore for the results of the games played.

At Last It Can Be Told: SPI has announced their first four games in their micro (oops) *mini* games series. The games will be SG in nature and concern space combat around a stargate, the attack of a monster on a city defended by the national guard, battle for the riches on Titan, and a tactical space game that accents the differences between ship types and weapons.



SWORDS AND SORCERY
TWO REVIEWS

by

David J. Butler

and

David James Ritchie

(THE SPACE GAMER presents two reviews of this new, SPI game in the hopes that it will be of some help to the average gamer who has limited funds and wants to get the most out of his money. The opinions and observations of the two reviewers are their own, and do not reflect any judgements by TSG or its staff.)

SWORDS AND SORCERY is SPI's latest offering in the fantasy line. It sells for $13 in hard box with counter tray (or $12 in plastic bag).

This *is* an impressive game.

In the first place, the physical package is worth the extra one dollar. The box is a colorful, solid construct which is strikingly illustrated with fighting hero and heroine in back to back defense beside a slaughtered dragon. Inside, a compartmented counter tray is fitted with a snap lock transparent lid that doesn't quite fit (close enough, though). Persons familiar with SPI will note that this is quite a step up from their previous vacu-formed flimsys.

The remaining game components are of similar quality in the best SPI tradition.

The heavy paper map is 22 inches by 34 inches and features more than two dozen distinct terrain types from bottomless pits to cultivated fields. The area covered by the map is the mythical "Valley of the Sword". Spread through this area from the fortified border of the empire to the killer penguin infested glaciers of the far north are provinces defining the boundaries of the last enclaves of this world's non-human races and human dissidents.

About four hundred, two sided counters in eight colors (purple to yellow) are used to represent the armies and characters of eight different races and their political subdivisions plus vortices, conjured armies and demons, stellar phases, devasted terrain, monsters, and diplomats. Fifty-six punch out cardboard cards illustrate and define the capabilities of monsters, characters, and magic items.

The fifty-six page rule book is complete and well organized in spite of a few minor faults (read on); but require careful reading to insure that all important details are picked up. The over-all thickness need not discourage you as twelve pages are pseudo-history or fictional narrative, seventeen are for the quest game rules, ten are scenarios with the rest being the army game.

Additional items include two handy chart folders; a sheet with solar, combat, and diplomacy displays; and two of the inevitable, SPI mini-dice.

Physically, then, this is a well made game. However, we all know that play--and not pieces--is what makes a game. So it is with SWORDS AND SORCERY. This proves a double score with both an army game and a quest game included.

The army game features mass conflict between the usual elves, orcs, dwarves, dragons, men and their subdivisions plus the more exotic cronks (skunk-devils from the bottomless pit), spiders, and the bizarre mixed alliance that makes up the swamp creatures. The system is basically a move and attack sequential arrangement with hexes, ZOC's and such. However, wizard and leader counters have potent effect on battles; and strategic magic spells are a well integrated part of the system. In addition, random events and a varying order of play give the progress of action enough uncertainty to shake *sure* plans and to give even the most skilled player a challenge. Diplomacy can be a decisive action in winning neutral nations to your aid by interacting race, ability, magic, and luck.

Fourteen scenarios cover situations from civil wars and greedy free-for-alls to outright attempted genocide. Sides vary from two to seven, and length from seven to twenty-seven turns (about one to five hours).

All is not perfect, however. The counter mix was apparently not designed by the same person who wrote the scenarios. For example, several scenarios call for eight nonexistant light infantry for the Endorians and there are too few dragons. Some scenarios appear to have errors in set up (troops that have no provinces to set up in or characters named in the scenario summary, but not in the set up). At least half the scenarios call for some adjustment in assigned forces due to such lapses. Generally this is obvious and no major problem.

The quest game a simultaneous movement system and adds individual combat and magic. Instead of scenarios, a number of quests are selected to equal half the number of players. Certain players are assigned as questors and compete to achieve objectives which vary from treasures, artifacts and big game to

assassination and sabotage and rescue. These players may use either predetermined characters from those provided or may generate new ones from a comprehensive set of charts. The other players take the part of defending the quest objects with assigned characters and armies. Three to twenty-four may play (recommended is five) and twelve different quests are detailed.

While the movement and search system provided is excellent and would be a good addition to other role playing games; the combat is somewhat lacking. To be specific: 1) There are no ranged weapons, except magic. 2) As the rules are currently, you do not have to even enter the combat area from the holding area; and interaction between holding and combat is not explained. Finally 3) as written, characters will most often be able to exit the map before they can be engaged (a simple "or" to "and" change in 40.37 will handle that, though). Once you've adapted that to your liking, however, all's well.

Adequate rules are not given for combining army and quest games. The developers appear willing to leave that option to the player. Combination however you do it does add much scope and enjoyment to the game.

In summary, this is a fine, second generation fantasy and role playing wargame whose roots can be seen extending to SORCEROR, WAR OF THE RING, and DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS. A few faults and frivolities are noted; however, this game must be considered a superior addition to any fantasy gamer's collection. Quest and scenario creations and the introduction of characters from other campaigns should keep this game alive a long time.

David J. Butler

SPI's long-delayed SWORDS AND SORCERY has finally hit the shelves and it would seem that fantasy gaming has taken another step backward. Were it not for that unfortunate constitutional provision forbidding cruel and unusual punishment, justice might be swiftly meted out in this matter. The law being what it is, though, the worst that the designers of this piece of insulting trash are going to get is a few nasty reviews. In fact, there are just enough good elements buried in this game and just enough people in this world willing to tolerate (and even be amused by) infantile creations of this sort that the game may even find a following in the hobby. When one considers the number of well-thought-out and beautifully executed fantasy offerings currently on the market, that S&S will doubtless drain off many dollars from the unknowing and uncaring which might otherwise have gone elsewhere is a sad commentary on the state of the hobby.

SPI does a number of things quite well. In fact, when it comes to simulating straightforward military events, I doubt that anyone can really approach their level of polish and expertise. Their recent series of grand tactical simulations of WW II battles have left most other companies gasping in the dust of a winning entry in the competition for interest (and dollars). But when it comes to SF-F topics, SPI apparently can't find it with both hands. SWORDS AND SORCERY is no exception (though it should have been after the staff seemed to have gotten it together with WAR OF THE RING). The whole concept of the game indicates what is wrong with both this offering and with other of SPI's efforts in SF-F. Instead of a game dealing with some novel which would have required the designers to follow someone elses story line and accept the natural laws of someone elses world, SPI decided to start from scratch. Terrific! Here could have been a fresh and interesting creation, unburdened by the conventions and characters of the more popular fantasy worlds which have been "gamed" to date. Yet, this advantage was almost immediately thrown away when the designers failed to set any sort of realistic parameters on their project. This game was not going to be a simple creation of a pleasurable fantasy! Oh no! Here would be the final word on fantasy gaming, an intense exploration of the *entire* genre. It must have slipped somebody's mind that this entire genre probably includes in excess of 5,000 major works and 10 times that number of minor worlds capable of further exploration. It goes without saying that S&S doesn't begin to catch the flavor of more than a small corner of this vast universe of the mind. Its efforts at comprehensiveness are embarassing to observe.

To a company like SPI, which operates so many projects and rides herd on so many designs during the course of a year, science fiction and fantasy must look fairly undistinguished and featureless as gaming topics. The same minds which can involve themselves with the endless minutiae of ob's and supply levels and to&e's necessary to recreate the entire

campaign in the desert on a heretofor unheard of scale, seem to balk at distinguishing between say, the picaresque swordsman sub-genre (a la Robert Howard's CONAN) and the story of how the good guys finally won sub-genre (WOTR, obviously). So S&S offers a smattering of a dozen tangential plot lines (in the form of scenarios) employing characters and laws gleaned from two dozen mythologies. The resulting mish-mash of disparate concepts is hard put to maintain any illusion of another reality and, consequently, provides little joy of exploration.

As if this were not enough, the designers have committed a sin for which impalement is too light a penalty. Somebody in the group apparently saw a copy of VENERABLE DESTRUCTION and figured that it might be fun to similarly lard S&S with his own brand of wit. Of course, VD was designed as an amusing little satire which sells for half the price of S&S. It was not a major project of the biggest and slickest company in the business, designed for frequent replay. Seen once, VD's puns evoke a few guffaws. Seen a score of times, they become boring and even irritating. In the case of S&S, such moronic punning is conducive to anger and disgust from the word go. After all, I didn't pay $13 for the privilage of being subjected to a lot of sophmoric wit.

There was a time (a decade ago) when satirical slams against fantasy lit were fresh, new and some (BORED OF THE RING, John Jakes MENTION MY NAME IN ATLANTIS) even clever. Today, this body of writing is old and tired and should be given a rest. S&S, however, will not give it a rest. Starting with geographical areas (the Hill of Avalon, the Evalyn Woods, the Stream of Consciousness, the Nattily Woods, Ka Chunk, New Orc City, et al) and proceeding thru a list of often absurd game characters (Unamit Ahezredit, Jeremiah Ben Ruben, Gygax Dragonlord, among others), the designers make their "light touch" felt throughout. There is a certain "suspension of disbelief" required on the part of those actively seeking out a proferred fantasy. This willingness to accept a situation and enter into it on its own terms is a key element in any enjoyment of any fantasy offering. But how am I to suspend my disbelief and enter into the "reality" of a fantasy world when its creators are continually intruding to remind me of how cute they were to invent this world?

Even if the designers had taken a more sober and thoughtful attitude toward this project, I seriously doubt that it would have ended differently. After all, it takes some imagination to create and populate an entire world (or, in this case, the most exotic and interesting corner of a world). Frankly, the designers' idea of imagination leaves me cold. If I want lithe elves, ugly orcs and sturdy dwarves (called dwarrows in S&S), I'll turn to J.R.R. Tolkien. I find it a little annoying to discover the same Tolkien rip-off characters populating practically every new fantasy game I pick up. I also find it hard to believe that the planet Ararlve (on which the designers have set their creation) should be populated by life forms straight out of terran mythology and reality. Aside from wargs, spiders, goblins and all of the other species popularized by Tolkien, we have dinosaurs, wraiths, demonic infantry, kobolds, wyverns, centaurs, zombies, leprechauns, chimerae, vampires, frogs, ninjas, bears, griffons, jabberwocks, etc. In short, the designers found themselves incapable of making the creative leap necessary to rationalize their world and its beings and so adopted the DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS approach of tossing in masses of material (often poorly organized) gleaned from whatever myth strikes the fancy. An open-ended system like D&D can get away with that approach (indeed, that is its strength), but a closed-system board game like S&S can't. The intent may have been comprehensiveness; the effect is confuscation.

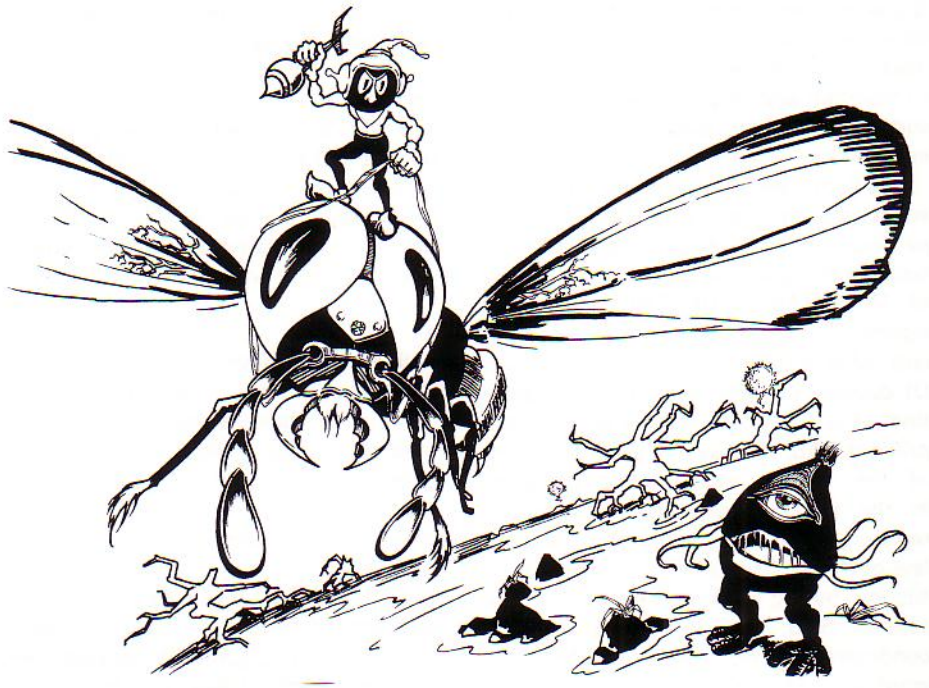
Where the designers have used their imaginations, the results have been mixed. The creation of the Cronks as a separate species having a military effect on the game points to where this project might have gone. On the other hand, the invention of "killer of pengiuns" (giant birds resembling the terran species except in size, temperment and their "armored beaks") was a mistake which should have been caught by the developer (unfortunately a co-designer). It is a lousy joke which can be taken as indicative of the designers' evaluation of the intelligence and sophistication of the buying public.

In their attempts at comprehensiveness, the designers have had to create a really impressively large package with 400 counters, sheet of displays, 22 x 34 mapsheet, 56 playing cards, 8 pages of charts and tables and a 56 page rulebook. Everywhere you look in this game there is print (even the back of the display sheet includes some notes and a bit of historical background on a minor game element). The game would have been far better if this wealth of print had been halved. For

one thing, this is not one game, but two. Yes, the designers have divided their efforts into an Army Game and a Quest Game, each with a separate sequence of play, each incompatable with the other. There is no Campaign Game. Instead, there are 14 scenarios for the Army Game and a dozen scenarios for the Quest Game. They cover a period of 2,000 years. The train of events portrayed is quite incoherent. The designers do include a rules heading titled MERGING THE ARMY AND QUEST GAMES. It consists of a suggestion that the individual combat sequence from the Quest Game be employed in the Army Game. Also included is a fond hope that someone will design a set of rules for merging the two games fully and will submit them to SPI where they will cheerfully be published in MOVES. All this in a rule section dealing with a nonexistent merger! Ah well! Doubtless, SPI will provide those of us who thought we were purchasing a complete game and who do not subscribe to MOVES with a copy of the appropriate issue. Somehow, though, I can't help but wonder why the designers could not get enough of a grasp of their material to meld it all into one game to begin with.

Aside from the redundancy generated by this two-games-in-one approach, the use of all of that historical background was not really necessary. If the design, itself, had maintained the necessary illusion, half of the explanatory material (at least) could have been left out, making for a readable set of rules. Besides, some of this so-called background has little or nothing to do with anything and much of it reads like WAR AND PEACE. The entire effect is as if the designers, having jumped in over their heads, said: *Well, hell, if ya can't dazzle 'em with design, baffle 'em with bullshit.*

At this point, I should probably say something good about this game so that nobody can shout foul. But I'm not going to do that! This is not intended to be a "balanced" or "fair" review in which the author provides his readers with a general and superficial outline of the game, makes a few nice or not-so-nice comments on its design and then urges his readers to white slave their sisters to Kuwait in order to scrounge up the scratch to buy this gobbler. Plenty of people will be impressed enough by the sheer bulk of the game to say and write lots of wonderful things about it. What is needed in regards to S&S is not an additional load of bilge on its merits (yes, there are more than a few), but a look at why this game fails in its purpose. Frankly, the conception is all wrong, the designers seem lost in the mass of their material and the game lacks any believeable rationale upon which to hang itself.



Rationale! Therein lies the crux of the matter. The game is slick. It is physically beautiful. Production, graphics, packaging are all great. There is enough detailing to give the Valley of the Great Sword the "feel" of a fully-developed world. But it is all for naught because the conception was so poorly thought out. The entire rationale of the game is included in the title: SWORDS AND SORCERY. Beyond playing around with the genre, nothing else seems to have struck the designers as important. Be comprehensive! Get that "fantasy feel"! Have a nice "light" touch! These seem to have been the catch-phrases around which the design attempt revolved. The resulting disaster is understandable, if not forgivable.

SWORDS AND SORCERY is available from SPI, 44 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010 for $13. It comes prepackaged in a pasteboard box with plastic sorter tray and lid enclosed.

David James Ritchie

RAUMKRIEG

A REVIEW

BY

W.G. Armintrout

Have you ever tried to imagine a massive space dogfight with nine separate fleets tearing into each other at the same time? What it would be like to command one of those fleets, and the intricate manuevers necessary to hit the enemy and avoid his angry retribution? Well, there is a game which bids to do just that.

The game is RAUMKRIEG, and it is produced and moderated by Flying Buffalo Computer Conflict-Simulation Inc. Flying Buffalo assembles the opponents, initiates the game, sends out by mail the computer-generated results for each turn, and prints final scores in its house magazine, *Flying Buffalo Quarterly.*

Play takes place within a two-dimensional space arena, graduated by an X-Y coordinate system ranging from 0 to 999. Between five and nine players are placed in each arena and allowed to set up their fleets in assigned regions of the arena before the game begins.

Each player starts with ten ships--a flagship, three battlecruisers, and six scouts. The scouts and battlecruisers are identical, except that battlecruisers have a greater range. The flagship captures it.

Fuel is allocated to manuever the ships. At any given moment a ship has a position and velocity. By using fuel to accelerate, ships can alter speed and direction. Ships begin with a fuel reserve and acquire more fuel per turn.

Firing takes place after movement. Ships fire at four possible ranges: close, short, medium and long. The ranges are differentiated by the width of the destruction they cause. Close range will hit anything within that range, while the other ranges hit anything within so many degrees of the direction of fire.

The goal of the game is to rack up points. Points are won for destroying ships. Flagships are worth 51 points. Battlecruisers give 31 pts, while scouts are only worth 11 pts. If players destroy a ship with more than one shot, they receive points for every ship which hit the destroyed ship. No points are lost for losing ships. Capturing ships is worth nothing.

A limited diplomacy is introduced by allowing players to communicate with each other. Messages for other players can be sent in to Flying Buffalo along with each move and will be delivered with the next turn's computer-printed results.

The game is twelve turns long. With each turn the player receives a printout showing the location, velocity, and last acceleration of all ships left in the arena, and the point total for each player. In addition, players are notified of the fuel left in their own ships. Ships destroyed in the last turn are marked on the printout.

RAUMKRIEG has the advantage of being a reasonably simple game. There are no intricacies of multiple weapons systems, "To Hit" charts, or requirements to keep track of ship damage. The limitation to two dimensions allows players to grasp what is going on and concentrate on tactics and strategy rather than figuring out the contents of the arena.

Even a simple game can have complexities. With RAUMKRIEG this lies in manuevering and firing. Ships traveling at high speeds can have a hard time trying to intercept another fleet, while slow-traveling fleets may never get near anyone else. Players may choose to let their ships coast along and save fuel for later manuevering, or they may sacrifice manueverability for speed and unpredictability.

There is also a pleasure in letting the computer moderate the game. Players are not required to juggle massive rows of statistics in order to follow the battle. The computer does most of that.

RAUMKRIEG drawbacks lie in the way the computer turns are printed. Players are given all locations by coordinate number, and must set up and plot the ships in the arena if they want to see a more visual picture of what is going on. In a game that can include as many as ninety ships this can be tedious. Some players use their own computers to interpret the turn results and generate a map.

The coordinate system itself can be a hassle for some. Players mixing up their X direction with their Y direction can do things they never dreamed of. I even know of one player who sent his entire force off the arena and out of the game on the first turn due to his confusion. This problem can be eliminated by careful attention to the game, generally.

Flying Buffalo has had troubles in the past with getting its turns out on time. Turns that are supposed to be two weeks apart have at times been three and four weeks apart. The company has made attempts to improve its performance in recent months.

One interesting side benefit lies in the fact that results are published in the house magazine, *Flying Buffalo Quarterly.* Players can thus compete for best overall averages in several games, and perhaps even gain a limited reputation in the world.

RAUMKRIEG costs $5 per game from Flying Buffalo, Inc.; PO Box 1467; Scottsdale, AZ 85252. Newcomers should include 25 cents and mention they need a copy of the rules.

RUNEQUEST

A REVIEW

by

Dana Holm

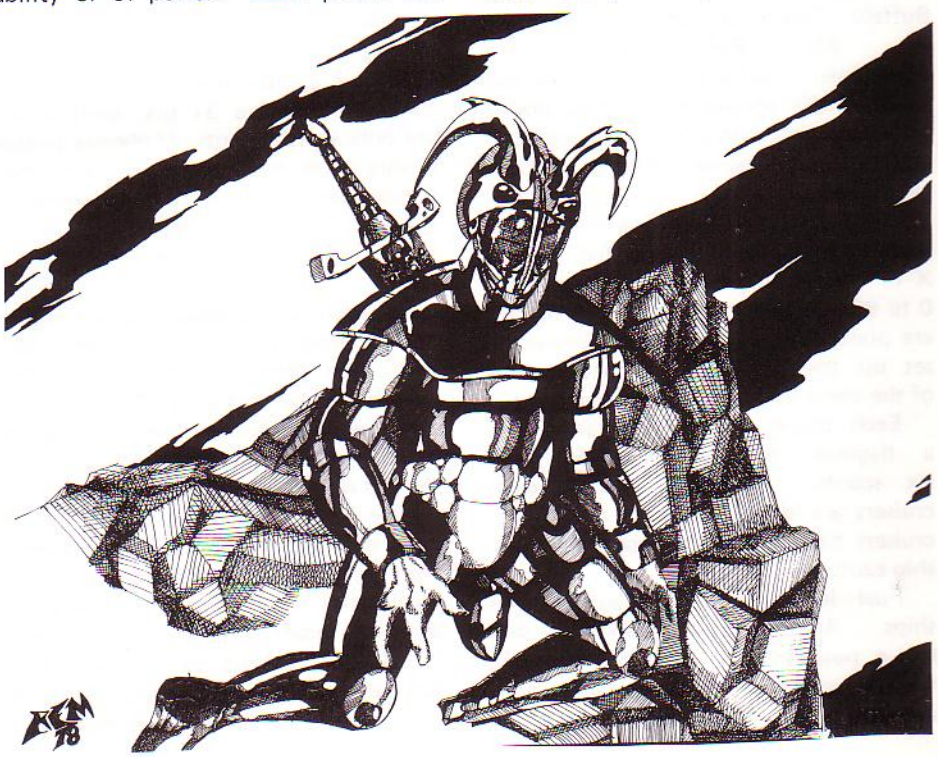
RUNEQUEST, a new swords and sorcery role-playing game, is a strange dicotomy-different and good. Credit for authorship is given to Steve Perrin & Friends. It is available from The Chaosium, PO Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706 for $8. It is set on the world of Glorontha, site of DRAGON PASS, another game by the same company. It includes background history of the world. The object of the game is for the player to advance his skills enough to become a hero or super-hero. Then he can take part in the heroic conflicts in DRAGON PASS.

To this end is directed the *differentness* of the game. There are no levels of advancement. Combat has a distinctive realistic flavor about it, probably because the author is a member of the Society for Creative Anacronism. Armor doesn't make one harder to hit, but decreases the damage done by enemy attack. And any character can use magic, there being no classes as such. Magic, however, has only limited effects. Throughout the descriptions of "what" is a cute little story of one Rurik, who is used as an example to *show* "how".

To create a human adventurer, one uses the tried and true three dice for each characteristic. Other types of creatures have different amounts of dice or adds to dice, giving races with different characteristics as well ad different uses. The seven characteristics used are: strength, intelligence, power, constitution, dexterity, charisma, and size. Abilities, distinct from inherent character traits mentioned above, are affected by combinations of those traits, with each trait affecting several abilities. Abilities are things like: climbing, hiding, striking, parrying, etc.

The functions of strength, intellignece, dexterity, and size are fairly obvious. Power is the ability to work magic and to resist others working magic on you. Use of magic temporarily depletes power, resting recharges it. The successful use of power, as well as the use of abilities, can lead to the increasing of that ability or of power. When power and other characteristics and abilities have been raised high enough, the adventurer can join a rune cult, gaining the use of more powerful magic and the favor of that god. With that help, he is well on the way to becoming a hero.

There is another way to increase the power availbale to the character. Have someone or something else supply him with power or cast spells for him. This requirement is fulfilled by having spirits "bound" to the character. Of course, to do this requires defeating the spirit in combat. Something that is usually hard to do, because spirits' power runs three dice plus six, which means that



it's power is the greater. And to lose a spirit combat means the player has lost control of his character; he has been disposed.

The other characteristic that needs a little explanation is constitution. Since there are no levels to be gained in Runequest, there are also no hit points to be increased. Therefore, you get a fair supply to start with- your constitution. It is sometimes possible to increase constitution through training. This is nice, because saving throws versus poison of disease are rolled against it.

Melee in Runequest takes place in four ordered phases, and is, in some ways, like Metagaming's MELEE. All involved state intent; move; fight, including missiles and spells; and do bookkeeping. Movement of more than half of the movement allowance precludes any combat that round. It is during the actual melee that another good, yet different, idea surfaces.

Attacks are ordered by "strike rank", lowest rank striking first. There are five criteria used in determining at what strike rank one strikes. With a low enough rank, more than one action per round is possible. The criteria are: size, dexterity, weapon length, surprise, and movement. Different spells are considered as different weapon lengths. No one catagory affects rank by more than five points with the average being two. But with only 12 strike ranks per melee round, these effects add up.

To resolve the melee once the order has been established, several steps are done. The attacker rolls percentile dice. At or under his attack chances, varying according to weapon and training with that weapon, and he hits. The defender then rolls percentile dice, trying to roll at or under his chance of parrying. If he succeeds at the parry, the enemy weapon doesn't hit him, but rather his parrying device- shield or another weapon. Parrying causes weapons to take damage. Each weapon has a certain amount it can take before it breaks. If a hit has *not* been parried, a 20-sided die is thrown to see where the blow landed. Then dice, depending on the type of weapon, are thrown. Armor subtracts the amount of damage it can and the rest reaches the character.

Each hit location can take so much damage, depending on the constitution of the character. Various things happen when a certain number of hits are recorded at a location. Possible outcomes are: nothing, functionally incapacitated which allows no further fighting until healed, or severing of a limb. It is possible to fumble or get a critical hit. It is also possible to impale an enemy, which adds to the damage done.

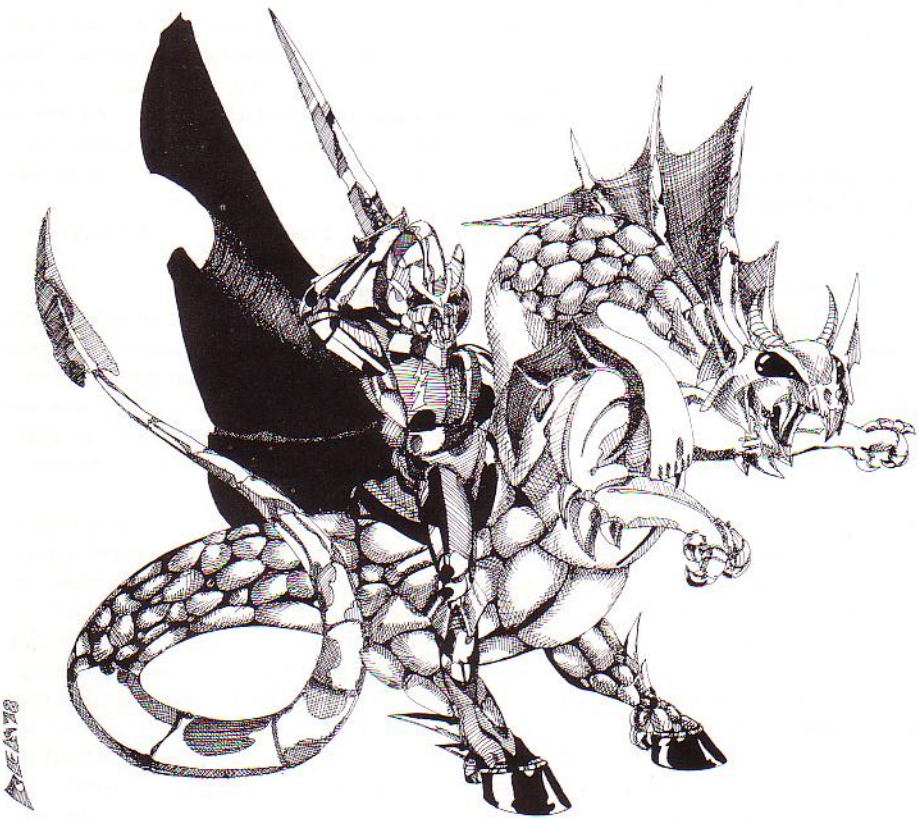
There are other sections of the book (being 116 8½ x 10½ sized pages long) that describe the procurement and use of other items handy to an adventurer. In fact, if he so chooses, the player need not be a fighter at all. He could join the Alchemist's guild, Armorer's guild, Thieves' guild, or the Brotherhood of Sages. He could join after a career as a fighter or learn from during that career: the Maritime Brotherhood, the Free Foresters, or the Horsemaster's guild. The rune cults are described, both how to get in and the advantages and repsponsibilities of membership.

There is another section of 23 pages on the monsters; most different, and all unusual. They have the same set of characteristics as humans, but using different amounts of dice and/or adds to dice rolls. Their weapons characteristics are given. Also given are special hit location tables, as these monsters may have wings, extra arms, or tails.

A further six pages are used in describing treasure and the distribution of it. Something called "treasure factors" is used in determining how much treasure the monsters will have. Basically this allows the tougher or more numerous monsters to have more treasure, so that rewards are commensurate with the risks taken in fighting those creatures.

There is a section on the referee's responsibilities. It includes weapons descriptions, maps of the Dragon Pass area, encounter tables, and optional rules. Included in this book are several pull-out sheets with all the various lists and charts needed in play. Also included are pull-out character sheets, logically organized and with permission give to copy them. With the pull-out play aids, this game is much easier to play than it would be if one had to look through four or five chapters to find what you want. Although that would be no problem with RUNEQUEST, as it contains a good table of contents.

A lot of thought has gone into this game. It shows. It is playable yet realistic. You don't need several supplement books to play it. Even though it was designed to fit one particular world, it could easily be used for any world. Since this game contains a logical system, almost anything can be added to the matrix it presents. A gem of a game. You won't be disappointed.



THE FIRING LINE

by
Tony Artuso

The use of Robert Kringstad's discovery as a military weapon was only inevitable. Kringstad proved in 1987 that the human mind was capable of projecting an image of its thought waves in the form of "psionic"waves, as he called them. Among the other things, these psionic impulses could do was to move from mind to mind and so transfer thought--thus explaining psychic phenomena. The projections could also disrupt the brain waves or thought of other people. These projections were even able to battle each other. The further discovery that the brain produced masking, or defensive, psionic fields set the stage. By 2010 nearly all armies worthy of the name had a Telepathic Corps. Much like the biplanes of another era, these "T.P.'s" were soon battling each other in individual dogfights.

* * *

They called it the firing line. It wasn't much to look at, though--just a row of chairs standing before a long, narrow shelf that served as a desk top. But along that desk, battles were fought--silent, menacing duels in which the only sound was the incessant hum of the fluorescent lights overhead. In this room, one could find at least twenty of the latest developments in weapons systems sitting, ready to perform. Yes, this was the firing line. Tom Bennett liked to remind himself of that every time he started a new watch. He also liked to remember that he was one of those "developments"--a trained, Attack T.P.

Bennett smiled wryly to himself as he sat down at his place. Originally only the dogfaces who had seen the desk had called it the firing line. It had been a bitter joke, a grim jest as they set off to fight their more tangible battles with laser rifles and missile launchers. But before the staff was calling it that, and even the official orders used the unofficial title. It had been a while, though, before the telepaths had adopted the name. Once they did, they meant it. The joke had ceased to be funny. This *was* the firing line, and its battles were as real as the firefights of the dogfaces.

The young man glanced up at the clock, whose glowing face read 21:00. Bennett's watch didn't start for another five minutes, but his early arrival always gave him a chance to prepare himself and to talk to the other telepaths as they came off their watches. Beside him, a pale girl hunched, becoming suddenly stiff and then relaxing as she felt out the enemy positions with her mind. The place on his other side was vacant. Jackson wouldn't be back for quite a while.

The pale girl stared silently into space, her pupils contracted to pinpoints as her mind groped about. Finally, the blue of her irises began to recede as the pupils expanded once more. Her body became limp, and she swallowed hard. "Over," she whispered to herself, slouching in her chair half asleep. Even though he saw her every day, Bennett wasn't sure of the girl's name. He thought it was Kim. She was a Communications Telepath. Of that, he was certain.

"Well, how is it out there in no-man's-land? Are they biting?"

The girl didn't seem to hear him at first, but presently she answered as if in a trance. "Pretty rough. A few of the Attack T.P.'s are getting nasty." The girl dragged herself up out of the chair and, for the first time, looked directly at Bennett. "You'll have a three-aspirin headache when you're done." With that, she turned and left, a hand on her forehead to steady herself.

By now most of the last watch had gone, though a few zealots held on, prolonging the mental dogfights with their enemies in hopes of coming out on top. And, except for a few shirkers who tried to forestall the inevitable moment, the new shift had arrived. A tall girl, her long black hair falling to her shoulders in a disorganized bundle, now occupied Kim's chair. A middle-aged man, with lines already deep on his forehead, was in Jackson's. Bennett exchanged greetings with the "old man," as they called him, and then turned to speak to the dark-haired girl.

"They say it's worth three aspirins out there." He smiled companionably, trying to draw her out.

The young woman only looked at him blankly and shrugged. She was what they called a "Wild Card" or "Top T" in the business. Headaches didn't concern her. Normally, telepaths were classed according to their area of strength--i.e., Attack T.P.'s (or Aces), like Bennett; Defensive T.P.'s (or Deuces), like the "old man;" and Communications T.P.'s, like Kim. But "Top T's" defied all categories. They could do everything; and "Top T's" were beyone the headache stage. As far as Bennett could tell, "Wild Cards"never really came out of the T.P. trance like everyone else.

"I just thought you'd like to know." He shrugged and grinned.

The girl said nothing.

A low, mechanical whistle curtly silenced the chattering room, and once more the only sound that could be heard was the hum of the lights. Lag-time was over. Everyone on watch had to be there, and everyone going off had to be out of the way.

Reluctantly, Bennett closed his eyes to the image of the familiar room around him and began the inexorable slide into telepathic trance. He stood on the threshold of a surreal world where time and distance meant nothing, and no sight nor sound intruded. Only invisible powers could be felt, as they groped and struggled in separate combats. About this time a panic always seized Bennett, and he felt overcome by a horribly vivid drowning sensation. Fighting down the urge to dash for the surface--to escape

from the insane mind duels--he once more found himself on the mental battlefields.

The young man could feel the defensive fields being generated by the Deuces all about him. He could feel the messages of the Communications T.P.'s as they went from brain to brain. He could also sense the other Aces as they cautiously cast forth their brain waves, looking for their opponents amid the shadowy terrain of the mind. Bennett, too, began to cast, warily searching for the enemy. The enemy, however, found him first.

Bennett's throat constricted, and his body stiffened. From out of nowhere, he felt his brain suddenly grabbed and wrenched hard, as if the tentacles of a hideous octopus had taken hold of his cautiously projected consciousness. He struggled vainly to free himself from the iron-banded grip of the enemy brain waves which bore down on him relentlessly, but the beast that had caught him was powerful and capable of hiding the main bulk of its brain waves behind Defensive T.P.'s while its mighty feelers searched out a victim. Bennett's mouth went dry, and he felt as if an anvil had been dropped on his lungs. He'd caught hold of a Top T--or, rather, a Top T had caught hold of him.

This enemy would disrupt and shatter his victim's brain waves, fragment his consciousness and then leave hes shattered mind upon the field to collect what it could and limp back behind the safety of his screens. But that hadn't happened yet; and, before it did, Bennett would give him a fight. In three years on the firing line, he'd learned a thing or two, and now he'd put that knowledge to use. With a jerk, the Ace freed a casting wave; and then, fighting off the enemy tentacles with the rest of his mind, he desperately cast it. The psionic impulse had not gone far before the Top T was upon it, trying to fight off the cast which had come perilously close to his own brain. In his haste, he dropped the rest of Bennett's extended mind. Taking advantage of this sudden opportunity, the weaker telepath pulled himself back behind the defensive screens.

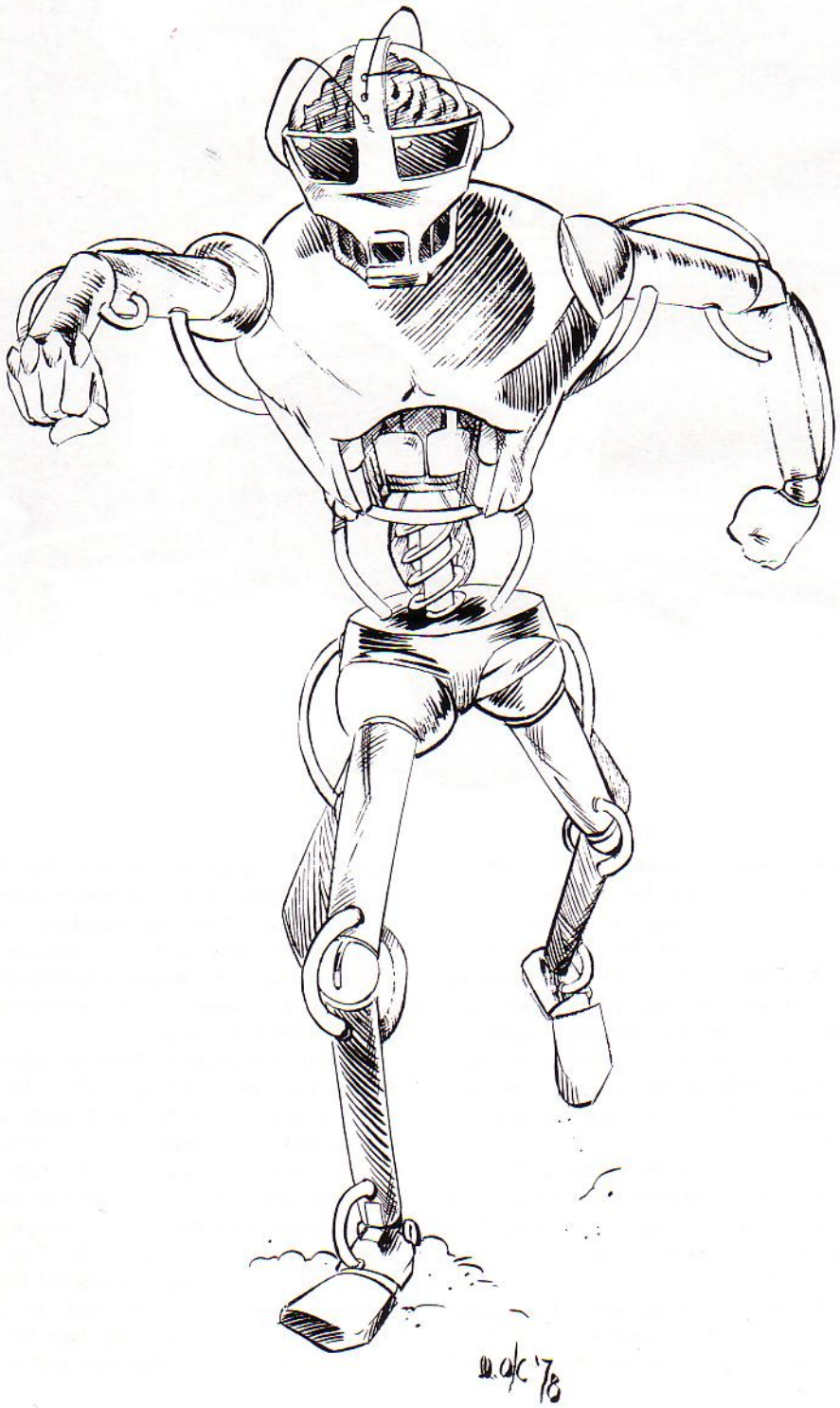
The panting young man was safe for the time being, as long as the Deuce protecting him held out. Bennett knew, of course, that the enemy T would not give up, but his foe's next move caught him completely by surprise. With a sudden lunge, the Wild Card shattered the defensive screen that masked the Ace and attacked its generator, the "old man." Hardly aware of what he was doing, Bennett hurled his whole mind into the fight, desperately trying to save his neighbor. With remarkable mental agility, the T quickly pulled himself away from his apparent victim and fell mercilessly upon Bennett. The young man felt his throat choke up again as the two extended minds clashed. Like the wind-powered ships of another era, when masts and rigging clashed and became hopelessly entangled in the heat of battle, so, too, did the minds of the telepaths as they collided in a frenzy of casts and counter-casts.

In the midst of the battle, as Bennett struggled to maintain himself, he actually seemed to see his opponent's face. Pale and lined, it was stretched thin, and a light seemed to shine through it. But the burning red eyes were what caught his attention. They were two pits of fire that slowly grew nearer--invincible, unstoppable. Suddenly Bennett felt his enemy's "claws" about his throat--crushing, strangling. The boy panicked. His mind reeled; and, with the convulsive energy of fright, his thoughts kicked and struggled and again forced themselves free from the hideous grasp.

Almost immediately, Bennett realized that he had been "let" go. The Top T had purposely let him slip through his fingers; and, what's more, he had deliberately projected the vision of the face to make his opponent panic. Spurred by a sudden spasm of returning fear, the Ace's mind reached out again. The Top T wasn't there! He had disappeared from Bennett's front, but he had to be somewhere near. Then the boy felt a painful wrench in his stomach, and shiv-

ers ran a torturous route down his neck. The T had somehow slipped behind Bennett's projected thought web and had entered his defenseless brain from behind.

The Ace could feel him now, his projected psionic impulses creeping slowly up the lowest portion of his victim's brain--the medulla oblongata, controller of all vital body functions. The battlefield had shifted from the telepathic void to Bennett's brain, where any struggle between the wills of the two combatants would do more harm to Bennett than to anyone else. The force of the psionic casts necessary to do battle would disrupt every brain wave in the vicinity of the clash, disabling that portion of the brain completely for a few seconds or whole years. If the boy attacked his enemy in his own medulla, the resulting psionic disruptions would make his body go wild and surely kill him. Bennett would now have to play a telepathic chess game, carefully maneuvering his enemy into less sensitive territory.



The Top T knew his advantage, though, and made use of it. He began to selectively disrupt nerves in the medulla, slowing down Bennett's heartbeat, then speeding up the rest of his metabolism, then causing tremors throughout his victim's body. But the boy stayed his ground. He knew his opponent wasn't interested in the lower portions of his brain but the higher ones, where the telepathic centers were located. The T was only trying to goad Bennett into a rash fight in his own medulla.

Still the tremors became worse, and his brain started to become sluggish. The Ace had to do something, or he'd be shaken out of his trance. Then, defenseless, his mind would be easily crushed by the enemy. Gently, while keeping the bulk of his telepathic strength facing the ever-present menace, the boy reached a psionic arm around the T to the top of his spinal cord just below the medulla, carefully keeping his opponent's attention diverted while he did so. Then, when the cast had reached its mark, Bennett, too, began to neutralize nerves; but he disrupted the ones that carried the unwanted impulses his enemy had implanted in the medulla. The tremors stopped, and his body began to work at a normal pace again. While still carefully controlling the impulses to the rest of his body, Bennett's mind turned once more to face the T.

The Wild Card, he found to his dismay, had hesitated in the midst of his work, aware that something was amiss. His thought projection stiffened for a moment; then the T began to probe slowly downward, as though he were walking through a mine field or expected another telepath to pounce on him. Bennett's heart sank. His attempt to distract the T must have failed, for he was sure that his opponent now sensed his extended arm. All he needed to do was brush it aside, and then, with Bennett's projection no longer able to control the impulses from his brain, there would be no telling what his body would do. Perhaps his heart might stop entirely or burst into a renewed surge of pumping. Despite his horror at the prospect, Bennet sighed in disgust. The T's exaggerated caution was unnecessary, for his prey was as good as dead. Why should he prolong the agony by advancing so slowly to the kill?

Bennett had little time to ponder this question, however, before he felt the first of the T's probes brush against his arm. The young man tensed in fear, frantically searching for a way to oppose the T without making another cast. All he could do was to generate a makeshift defensive

thought screen in front of his telepathic arm and wait for the lunge. He did so, realizing that it would be too weak to hold up for long since he was not a Defensive T.P. The screen was barely in place when a mighty thrust shattered it and tore Bennett's arm from his spinal cord with amazing force. The T raced on downward but then stopped abruptly, as if he'd run into a brick wall. Some invisible power seemed to block his escape.

To Bennett's astonishment, his body remained stable under the strain, apparently also controlled by an unsensed entity. He couldn't feel any kind of disruption as a result of the T's tremendous cast. The boy was so relieved that he momentarily dropped his guard above the medulla--which was a serious mistake. This lapse allowed the T to rush upward toward the higher centers of Bennett's brain, where he attacked the Ace's main psionic projection with renewed vigor, bordering on desperation. Since Bennett was not prepared for this onslaught, his projection fell back, and the Top T's impulses raced through the gap.

Before he knew what was happening, Bennett felt his thought projection begin to crumble. It seemed as if someone were amputating his arms from behind. With a convulsive leap, his mind turned to face the threat from this new direction. The Wild Card had fallen upon the boy's psionic centers, high in his brain, and was preparing to destroy the Ace's remaining telepathic strength.

Panic, compounded by exhaustion and long casting, seized Bennett. He projected wildly into the telepathic void, thinking somehow he could escape; but, instead of escaping, he only found his thoughts stretched far into the psionic no-man's-land which separated the two lines. He could feel the mental melees about him, as other telepaths dueled in frenzied combats, and then slowly, it seemed, although the whole thing took only a few seconds, he became aware of the proximity of his enemy's brain. It was entirely naked. No screens hid or protected it, though he felt screens stretching the whole length of the enemy battle line. The Top T's brain was a salient along that line, and from it stretched the mighty arms of his telepathic projection, as it slowly choked Bennett's mind.

An unreasoning rage welled up in the boy; and, with a scream that shook the whole length of the silent firing line, he fell upon the naked brain and attacked it like a madman. He ripped and tore at the psionic centers of his enemy with a dozen wild casts. Blind and helpless, he slashed at the exposed arms as they stretched across the void toward his own fragile mind.

All at once the Top T's arms began to collapse under Bennett's onslaught. Had he been fresh, he might have been able to ignore the Ace's attack, but the Wild Card had been projecting for well over an hour. The strain was too much; he could fight no longer. He could not even finish his victim; but, in one final effort, he lunged forward into the boy's mind. Beneath him appeared Bennett's pain centers. Even a slight brush would cause a considerable amount of suffering. He drove into them with two powerful casts, "clawing" viciously at the seat of all physical agony. Then, with inexplicable haste, the Wild Card withdrew.

The pain of a violent, neck-cracking wrench ripped Bennett from his trance. His whole body literally throbbed with the torment. For a moment, he was fully, lividly conscious; then, like the fading rays of the sun, he plunged into darkness.

* * * * *

When he awoke, Bennett found himself in the infirmary. The dark-haired girl was leaning over him.

"Feeling better?" Her whispered voice seemed to echo off the walls.

Bennett grunted.

"That one was a little much for you," the girl chided. "You wouldn't have been able to handle that Top T if I hadn't come along and helped you. Oh, I did help you even if you didn't know I was there. We Wild Cards have a funny way of hiding where you don't expect and can't sense." A translucent smile flickerec across her face.

Bennett smiled back. Maybe Top T's did come out of trance once in a while, he thought.

"Well, anyway, I took care of him when he was done with you." The girl got up and started to leave but then turned to face her comrade again. "Oh, by the way, I do get headaches." Her voice sounded strangely ironic. "I'll need four aspirins just to recuperate from helping you." The smile flickered across her face once more as she turned to go.

"Jan!" The name seemed to come to him nautrally, as if Bennett had known what to call the girl all along. "Will I have to go back?"

She turned and slowly nodded. "When you've gotten built up again--in about a week." With that, the T turned and disappeared down a dim corridor.

Bennet sighed heavily. Ten years wouldn't be a long enough wait!

DESIGN MICROGAMES FOR METAGAMING

If you want to work for a game company here is your chance. Metagaming is expanding its publication schedule of MicroGames. Here is your chance to work free lance as a game designer.

Working by mail is more difficult than face-to-face methods. More demands are placed on the designer for a completely playtested and edited game. A desinger will be expected to achieve good quality in all of the following:

1. Playtesting: Any design submitted must be playtested.. We can easily spot games that haven't been played competitively. So, be sure you try your idea on other people before sending it.

2. All components necessary except dice, for play must be submitted.

3. Rules must be well written technichally. If you don't follow the rules of correct English, others can't understand your ideas.

4. Try to do something new, even if only from a different viewpoint. Don't send games based on books, movies, TV or other games. You could, for example, do a Battle of The Bulge game, but not one that requires the use of another company's game as a start.

5. Don't send us complex involved games. Micros are for fun which means easy to learn, easy to play and no tortured rules.

6. Don't count on us: Ideas are cheap. Everyone has a lot of ideas, good ones, that *could* make good, even great, games. The idea is the easy part, we've got'em too. What we're going to pay you for is the hard work of implementing that idea into a fun, playable game. Don't expect us to take your rough notes and a few ideas and make you a great game--that's your job.

The topics we'd like to see Micros on are pretty wide open, the following categories should be a guide.

1. Historical MicroGames: (Keith Gross, Editorial Coordinator) Metagaming will try to publish several historical MicroGames in 1979. These should be fun, balanced, playable games. Abstraction of historical themes is more important than historical accuracy. Maps may be of actual terrain. The most popular themes and time periods would be suitable for MicroGames. Tactical level games are probably most suitable for MicroGames.

2. Science fiction MicroGames: These can be planetary tactical games, space combat tactical, or something else. The emphasis for this group is imaginative themes with a "hard science" fiction content. Current Micros published are representative of what is wanted, but don't think of them as the limit.

3. Fantasy games: (Steve Jackson Editorial Coordinator) These should all be related to THE FANTASY TRIP game system. MicroQuest concepts such as DEATH TEST are suitable. Anything else original and not a stand alone game could also fit the MicroQuest format.

As soon as THE FANTASY TRIP: IN THE LABYRINTH is out, all MicroQuests should use those rules as their base. Remember, tunnel grubbing isn't the limit of fantasy adventure. There are a lot of other viable themes that can make great solitaire, programmed quests.

There will be many who want to send us "big" games. That's okay, but, your chances are slim. We want to see a Micro first. They are easily evaluated and show your skill.

Do not be disappointed if several rounds of improvements are necessary before a game is ready for publication. Working by mail takes time. The effort is worth it for a quality game.

The form reproduced with this article is the form you should submit with your game design. If you send us an idea and ask if we're interested all we can say is, "we'd have to see it in playtestable form to know". So, send us games, not ideas. The game is the measure, not the concept.

TO: Howard Thompson
Metagaming
Box 15346
Austin, TX 78761

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I am submitting to Metagaming for evaluation a game I have designed entitled

---.

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A complete copy of the game is attached for your evaluation. The following list of components is the complete game necessary for playtesting.

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2.	8.
3.	9.
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5.	11.
6.	12.

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I understand that Metagaming will acknowledge receipt of my submission in writing. Acknowledgement of receipt does not constitute a committment of Metagaming to buy the game.

I understand that Metagaming agrees to evalute my game design for possible purchase subject to the following conditions.

1. That this game design is not being concurrently submitted to any other firm for consideration.
2. That Metagaming will advise me of its decision within 90-180 days of my submission.
3. That the nature of Metagaming's decision will be as follows.
   a. The game design is rejected for publication. Metagaming will not buy the design and the designer is free to do with the design what he will.
   b. The design is accepted and will be purchased by Metagaming for no less than $500. More than $500 may be paid in certain cases.
   c. The design is accepted conditional upon the designer making revisions and improvements as specified.
4. Metagaming reserves the right to correct, alter or revise game designs purchased in the interest of efficient production.

Date----------Designer----------

Design Received

Date----------Signature----------

MICROGAME SPECIFICATIONS

DESIGN CONSTRAINTS

Rules: Approximately 4,000-7,000 words long
Maps: Two to six 4 1/8" x 7" panels (14" x 8¼", etc.)
Counters: One sheet 4 1/8" x 7 ". Standard game counter is .45" x .45". But, any sizes that can easily fit the sheet will work.

Initial Microgame designs submitted should not plan on more than the basic components list. A decision about using slightly larger components or otherwise enlarging the game will be made by Metagaming.

LETTERS

DEAR EDITOR,

I read with interest Mr. Wagner's article "Orcs and their Weapons" (TSG15), as I did his "Adjusted Orc Rules" (TSG 17). I thought that the original Orc Rules erred too generously on the side of the Orcs (perhaps Mr. Wagner is a secret sympathiser . . .?), and although the Adjusted Orc Rules tighten things up a lot, I still do not find them satisfactory.

HAND WEAPONS: I accept that the SCIMITAR (1+1, ST 9), the MIDDLE HAMMER (1+1, ST 9), and the HEAVY HAMMER (1+2, ST 10) do one point of extra damage because of the Scimitar being poisoned and the Orc's skill with Hammers--these are good rules.

POLE WEAPONS: The ORC SPEAR (1+1, ST 10) is a nice light spear, two-handed, and so a little heavier than the TRIDENT (1 Die, ST 10--"MELEE"--New Weapons" by Steve Jackson, TSG 13) which is a one-handed weapon, and so does one point extra damage; this also is a good rule. The GLAVES, however, are a different matter.

At 1+2, ST 10, the GLAVE is more cost-effective in terms of ST required to the damage done than the ordinary SPEAR (1+2, ST 11), although the Spear is a little more versatile as it can be thrown.

At 2-1, ST 12, the GREAT GLAVE is more cost-effective than the HALBERD; and this weapon and the Glave therefore destroy Mr. Jackson's carefully graduated Weapon Table, in which the weapons requiring the greater ST to wield do the greater damage.

To correct this, I suggest that the ST needed to wield these two weapons be increased by a ST, so preserving the correlation between ST to wield and damage done.

ARMOUR: WARG HIDE--little fellow or no, if they're carrying the weight and restriction of this type of light leather armour, they must pay the price of a DX-! There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch! I suggest that Warg Hide carrys a -1 DX penalty for stopping 1 Hit/Attack, in addition to the 1 MA penalty, which preserves the correlation between number of hits stopped and DX penalty.

OGRE PLATE--Mr. Wagner has actually penalized the Orcs with the adjusted rule for Ogre Plate Armour! The new DX-5 adjustment actually renders Ogre Plate LESS cost-effective than ordinary PLATE ARMOUR! What Orc will pay DX-5 for Ogre Plate's 4 Hits/Attack protection, when ordinary Plate Armour is DX-5 for 5 Hits/Attack? The extra 1 MA of Ogre Plate is of limited use also--if the figure moves more than two hexes it is more than ½ MA and so makes charge-attacking no easier than Plate Armour does. I suggest that Ogre Plate carries a MA penalty of -5, as Mr. Wagner states, but a DX penalty of -4, as the original Orc Rules stated.

Taking these things into account, the readjusted Orc Weapons Table Reads:

WEAPON	DICE	ST	NOTES
Scimitar	1+1	9	Usually poisoned. 1 Die weapon for humans, etc. Speciality of Orcs and Goblins.
Middle Hammer*	1+1	9	Orcs, like Swarves, get +1 when they use hammers--one point less damage for figures other than Orcs and Dwarves.
Heavy Hammer*	1+2	10	
POLE WEAPONS			
Orc Spear*†	1+1	10	Not an exclusively Orc weapon; may be used by any race.
Glave†	1+2	11	A weapon of exclusively Orc design; if picked up by an opponent after a fight, it is a 1+1 club.
Great Glave†*	2-1	13	As above -2-2 weapon for non-Orcs.

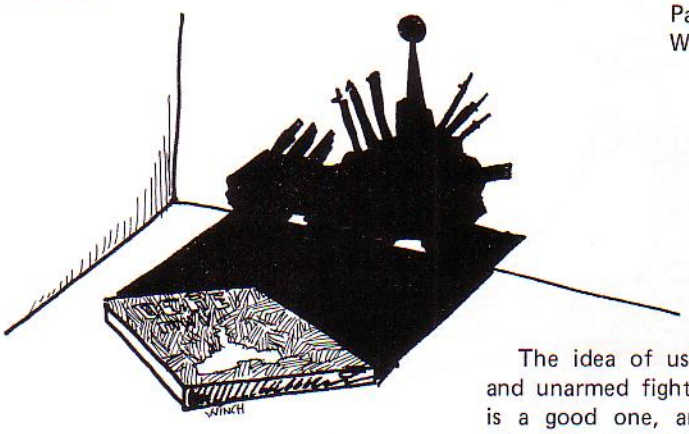
* This weapon may be thrown.
† This is a two-handed weapon.

ARMOUR			FIGHTER	WIZARD
Warg Hide	takes 1 hit/attack	wearer's MA = 9	DX - 1	DX - 1
Ogre Plate	takes 4 hits/attack	wearer's MA = 5	DX - 4	DX - 8

Warg Hide may only be worn by small figures whose ST + DX add to 22 or less; it won't fit anyone larger. Like leather, it will only take one point off the DX of a wizard, the same as it does a fighter.

I found Mr. Wagner's articles interesting and inventive--I hope he will forgive my criticism.

Paul B. Harrison
Worcestershire, England



The idea of using oriental weaponry and unarmed fighting techniques in TFT is a good one, and should be worked out. The articles by David James Ritchie and Donald Pehr are primary steps in that direction, but they make one basic mistake- everything is too easy to do. DX + 1 to use a KATANA because "Samurai tended to strike at the vital areas with precision". No way. DX + 1

with a KATANA makes it a magic sword. The above mentioned precision should be reflected in the DX level of the character using the weapon, not the weapon itself. A samurai would not be a basic 32 point TFT character. He would be a high DX (at least 14) experienced character, enabling him to use techniques and weapons with an automatic DX penalty sufficiently adjusted so that your average sword swinger is at a great disadvantage if he attempts to use them. All the techniques and most of the weapons in the "Harmonious Fists" articles should probably carry a DX subtraction. The saving rolls for weapon deflection should be more like 4 dice for thrown weapons, 5 for missile weapons.

IQ should be important to such fighters, too (especially the unarmed fighters). Possibly an adjustment of -1 on the "to hit" roll for each two points of IQ above IQ 10. This, unlike a +DX adjustment, would increase chances of double and triple damage.

I think that the basic ideas in the "Harmonious Fists" articles, if re-worked along the lines of the suggestions above, will make the oriental martial arts almost useless in the hands of an inexperienced dolt, but devastating in the hands of a trained, experienced warrior- which is the way it should be.

Ben V. Kloepper
St. Louis, MO

I hope I can give the readers of The Space Gamer a few points of correction in my article (No. 18), "The Great Northern War".

In the last paragraph in the section "Rule Changes: The Dark Power Player", my reference to the forces of Dunland is based on an earlier and incorrect belief that in a two-player game of WOTR, Sauron must use Shadow Points to move Saruman's armies. This mistake has been cleared up by a correspondance with SPI. This clarification should not substancially alter the play of the variation.

The first sentence of the third paragraph in the section "The Four Player Game" seems to have become garbled by the time it was printed. The sentence should read "All Fellowship armies that are deployed or moved north into the hex row containing 2220W, 3220W, 1620E, etc., are controlled by the *Northern Alliance Player.*" The Fellowship Player gains control if they move *south.*

Please add this to the section "The Five Player Game": If Saruman is a separate player, the Northern DP objectives become Thranduil's Palace and Galadriel's Palace (Lorien). This is to avoid a slugging match between Saruman and the Dark Power over possession of Hobbiton.

And here is one last bit of information for creating the Chief of the Easterlings: He has a movement allowance of "5".

Glenn Rahman
Theilman, MN

The article that leads me to write you is Mr. Thompson's column "Where We're Going". His desire to see "gamers" as heroes is a valid assumption whose time has come. His statement that "Gamers need to become gaming's heroes not for the ego trip but for the general good of gaming" is absolutely true. It is my hope that your company becomes a leader in this movement.

I would like to offer perhaps a few modest ideas of my own concerning ways to help bring this hope to a reality.

1. The first thing that must be done is to convince the present "heroes" (designers, publishers, etc.) to get behind this project 100 percent. This could be done at one of the conventions. In fact, some one should introduce this idea as a seminar as soon as possible.

2. A joint effort should be considered to set up and institute a method of instruction in wargaming. Though this would create many problems, I feel it is something which can be done. I do not believe in "classic moves or solutions" as in chess, however, a well-written review and summary of certain games and moves would surely be welcomed by the general gaming community. Secondly, it would be a sure help to the newcomers of the hobby, and thirdly, it would afford an opportunity to bring new writing blood into wargaming.

3. Mr. Thompson's concern about a rating system is aptly put. Until the hobby can put together an accurate rating system the project is doomed to utter failure. Perhaps AH's AREA system would be a good starting point. The biggest block to a rating system is what games, and probably more importantly (sad but true) whose games. At this time I can only conceive of one method to get a fair rating system, which is to allow the greatest possible number of gamers to vote. I would present a ballot in each and every major wargaming magazine and then have an independent group tabulate the ballots. Each rated game then would serve as a statistical base.

Oblivion is the only answer for our hobby as a major impact unless a true rating system can be developed. Perhaps other readers can flesh out some of these ideas. Thanks for allowing me to bend your ears.

David M. Elkin
Muncie, IND.

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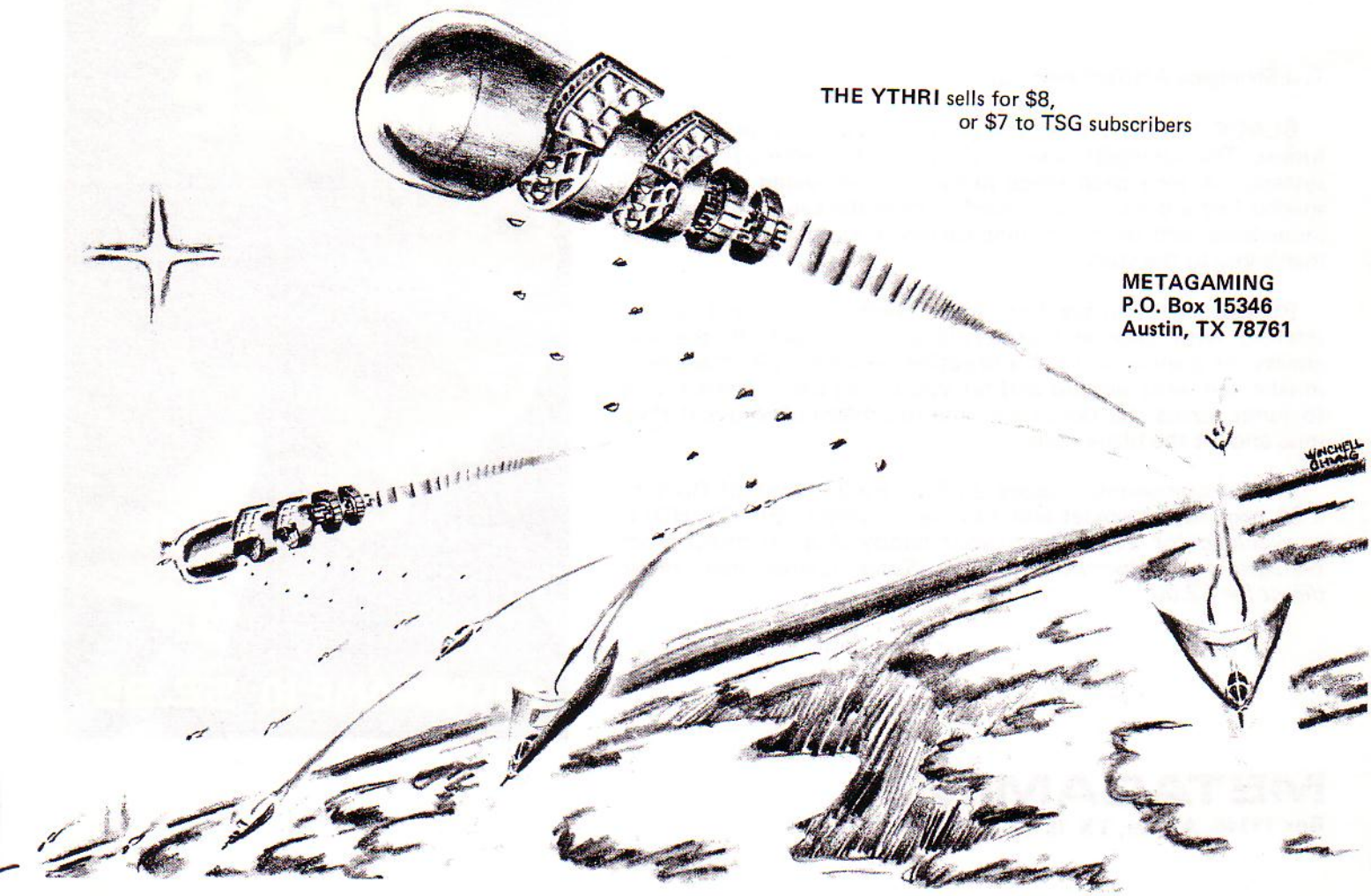
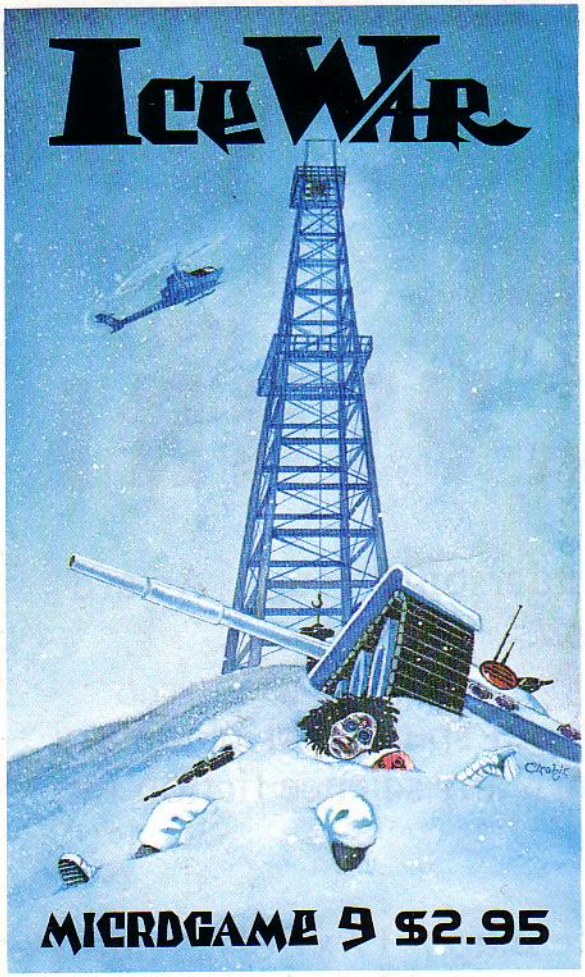




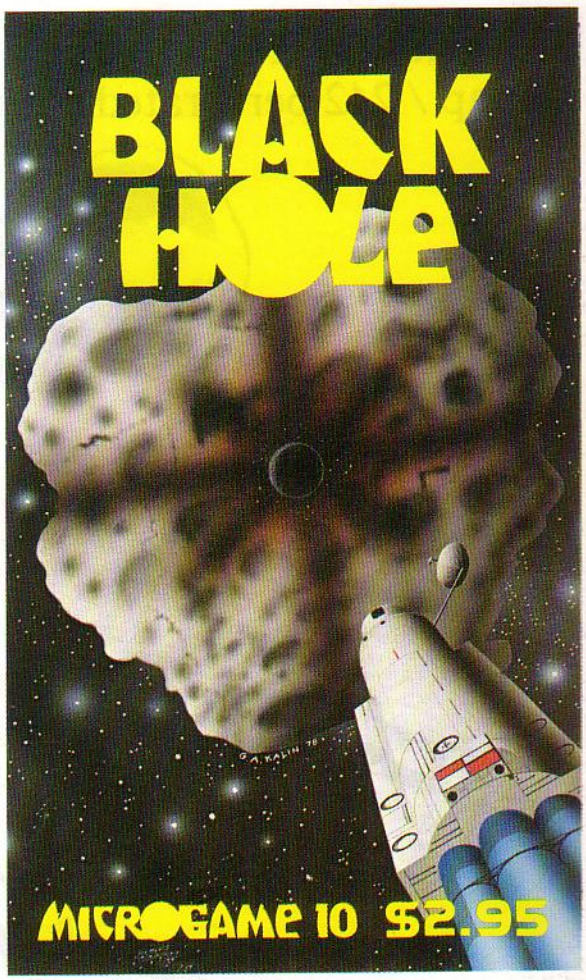
A Chilling Threat.....

ICE WAR is the ninth of the popular Microgames. Like other Microgames ICE WAR is easy to learn, fast playing and fun. ICE WAR is typical of classical military raids. Players rely on speed, confusion and hidden movement for success. The action is so fast and enjoyable you'll want to play again and again. It's the ideal game for novices or some lunch break fun.

ICE WAR simulates the Eurasian Socialist Alliance's trans-polar raid of 2007. The Third World War is deadlocked and the ESA is trying for a knockout of the last western oil at Prudhoe Bay.

The U.S.A. player must locate the ESA strike force, protect the oil field and hold on until reinforced. The ESA player must strike quickly with a special force of sled vehicles, hovercraft, infantry and other units. U.S.A. satellite dominance plays a crucial role in victory.

Components include 24 page rules booklet, 135 unit counters and an 8¼" by 14" map of the Prudhoe area. ICE WAR is $2.95 at your hobby shop or from Metagaming. *Subscribers to The Space Gamer may order direct for $2.50.*



The Strangest Artifact ever.....

BLACK HOLE is a unique game of speed, action and confusion. The strangest alien artifact ever has entered the solar system. A lone deep space miner has discovered an asteriod shaped like a donut with a black hole in the center. There is an immediate rush by the mining cartels to capture what may be man's key to the stars.

BLACK HOLE plays fast. Space combat units land on the asteroid with laser and projectile weapons. But, in the low gravity of a small body all projectiles go into orbit. Your own missile can whiz around and hit you in the back! Units trying to jump across the donut can end in a blaze of x-rays if they miss and hit the black hole.

Game components include an 8¼" by 21" map of Dunkin, a 24 page rules booklet and 135 play counters. BLACK HOLE is available for $2.95 from your hobby shop or direct from Metagaming. *Subscribers to The Space Gamer may order direct for $2.50.*

METAGAMING
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